

**What I did at
COMIC CON INTERNATIONAL 2003**

a rather long, but I hope somewhat interesting personal review
by
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Wednesday, July 16

Comic Con officially ran from Thursday, July 17 - Sunday, July 20, but for those who paid for the full four days, there was an additional Preview Night on Wednesday, July 16. I missed it last year, but was determined to make it this year. So after a six hour drive from Scottsdale, AZ, during which we started listening to the newest Harry Potter book on tape, we arrived in San Diego, CA. After standing in a loong line that snaked all the way around the San Diego Convention Center, my husband, Smoot, and I were able to pick up our registration packets. Then we got to stand in still another loong line waiting for the Exhibit Area to open at 5:30. I had hoped to get all my shopping done that night for the items I wanted and that others had asked me to get. Unfortunately, that was not possible. Some of the booths, esp. Mattel, were not selling on preview night. So Smoot and I scuttled over to the growing line for the Fett figures.

While he held our place in line, I tracked down the SOTA booth to get some of the Lara Croft Tomb Raider con exclusive figures that several people wanted. I was able to get two sets right off the bat. (At that point we were limited to two sets per person.) I

came back to the Fett line and sent Smoot over to buy two more sets. Unfortunately they had stopped selling them by then. (To finish the story - the next morning I got up early, stood in a very looong line to get into the con and exhibit hall early so I could try again. I discovered they had changed their rules to allow only one set per person which I bought. I tried again the next day, but the guys at the booth recognized me and said I'd already gotten my set. I then planned to send Smoot over to try to get one more set, but they had sold out completely by the time he could get back there. Sheesh, it's hard work being a collector.)

Back to the saga of the Fett figures. After waiting for quite a while, watched over by friendly Stormtroopers, we finally made it to the front of the line. I had dragged Smoot along because we were only allowed to buy two figures each and I wanted to get as many as I could. After paying for the four we were allowed, we were given the option of checking to see if the cards were in good condition and if not, to trade them for better ones. In the confusion of getting the best cards, we walked away from the counter and I realized I'd ended up with *5* figures. Smoot insisted I take the extra one back immediately but I just couldn't let it go. After taking all the figures back to my room, making it impossible for the extra to be returned, I went back to the counter and explained I had ended up with one more figure than I'd paid for and paid the clerk the additional \$10.78 (with tax). She seemed very impressed by my honesty, not knowing I'd really cheated a bit in getting 5 instead of 4 figures. But that meant I was able to help one more person on my waiting list.

And my conscience was mostly clear!

Wednesday night I was able to pick up several of the other things I and others wanted, unfortunately not the exclusive Clonetrooper bust. The line for it was almost as long as the line later that weekend for the Mattel Keldor and Batman figures, but it was even slower because each person buying a bust was also scanned for a contest. One lucky person would get their mug made into a bust, but I don't think that offset the extra time it took to buy the figure. They should have had one line for those who wanted to be scanned, and an express line for those who just wanted to buy the figure imho. Line control was a big issue in the exhibit hall as well as all over the convention center. Comic Con had hired a new security agency, Elite, whose staff were not as friendly and accommodating as the people used last year. And there seemed to be more people this year, not a surprise with the big Hollywood stars that were to appear. I wish there hadn't been any publicity about the stars and had it be a surprise, like last year. That would have meant fewer people crowding the hall just to see Angelina Jolie, Halle Berry and Hugh Jackman, none of whom I saw because of the crowds.

Thursday, July 17

The first official day of the con and there were now two looong lines, one for the people already registered to get in, and one for those waiting to register. I was on my own, since Smoot had discovered that TNT was broadcasting the British Open live and insisted on watching it. There weren't that many interesting

panels scheduled, since the big days were Friday and Saturday so I spent the day wandering around the exhibit hall again, in another attempt to get the collectibles I and others wanted.

Thursday night was the beginning of the Star Wars programming that would continue on Friday. According to the con program: "8:30–11:00 Lucasfilm and AtomFilms.com Present the Star Wars Fan Film Awards—These awards recognize the popularity and entertainment value of fan-made films relating to Star Wars, and the saga's impact on popular culture and the fan community. You'll see the best of the finalists' work along with some special surprises. The awards give creators of Star Wars fan films the opportunity to showcase their work to millions of viewers worldwide, both at the Official Star Wars Fan Film Network web site (www.starwars.atomfilms.com) and at Comic-Con International."

Steve Sansweet, the premiere Star Wars collector and now fan liason for LucasFilm, brought greetings from George et al and introduced Jeremy Bulloch, the original Boba Fett who was the MC for the event. There was a short montage of the finalist films and then a full screening of the winner, Pink 5, the battle of Yavin from the point of view of a ditzy, Valley-girl X-wing pilot. It was cute but I didn't think it was as good as last year's winner, Christmas Tauntauns. In fact, the whole crop of fan films didn't seem as strong this year imho.

The best part of the evening to both my husband and me was the

hilarious stage play of "The Star Wars trilogy in 30 minutes," adapted and directed by Patrick T. Gorman. He and his 12 person cast from the University of Southern California School of Theater celebrate the original; the plot is faithful and the dialogue is verbatim from the movies. The production values are a bit skimpy though - the light-sabers are whiffle ball bats. X-wings are chairs turned upside down. R2-D2 is a miniature trash can, carried around by Steve Josephson's C-3P0. When Josephson switches over to Yoda -- all roles except Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia and Han Solo are double cast -- he walks around on his knees with his elbows at his ears. If you've not seen it, I can highly recommend it. It left us both choking and gasping with laughter.

Friday, July 18

Friday was Star Wars Day. There was something Star Wars going on every hour of the day. Because I had been down in the exhibit hall trying, again, to get collectibles, I was late getting to the first panel and found it full. Starwars.com webmaster Paul Ens and LucasArts' Haden Blackman were to talk about Hyperspace, the site's plans for Episode III, and Star Wars Galaxies and other games. Oh well, can't make them all.

Instead I went to the panel on Comic Books in the Movies which the program described this way: "Some of the warriors of sf- and comic book-themed movies join Stan Lee for an insightful panel about the hottest phenomenon in movies today: the comic book superhero film. Lee, who is co-creator of the characters

featured in the biggest blockbuster comics films in recent years (Spider-Man, Hulk, X-Men) and other panelists explore the involvement of independent producers as well as big Hollywood studios in the development of superhero films. Joining Lee on the panel are Creative Light Entertainment's Scott Zakarin (Stan Lee's Mutants, Monsters & Marvels, Comic Book: The Movie), Mindfire Entertainment's Mark Altman (The Specials, House of the Dead), and actress Chase Masterson (Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, Creature Unknown). The panelists will share the secrets of what it takes to make a successful superhero movie and how to make comic book-themed movies economically." It was very interesting and Stan Lee is always a hoot.

After that I went back to the 'Star Wars room' to see if I could get in for the next panel on Hasbro's Star Wars line. When I walked in a guy was passing out sample letters that he recommended we send to Target, WalMart, TRU, KMart, etc. asking for better distribution of Hasbro's products. Steve Sansweet introduced the panelists who were Jeff Popper, Hasbro's Star Wars Brand Marketing Manager and Audrey DeSimone, also from Hasbro's marketing department, and Brian Parrish, a designer of some of the SW toys. The first issue raised by the audience was, of course, of the erratic availability of their products. Mr. Popper got a little defensive in reaction to the obvious anger of the audience over this issue. He said Hasbro has very little control over the retailers whose inventory systems don't seem to allow them to order more when they already have product on hand. He said they were trying to work out ways to

encourage retailers to cycle more new products into their stores. WalMart won't even be carrying anything but the 3 3/4 line in the fall.

Mr. Popper then described the plans for Jedi Master points. I haven't had a chance to read all the Fed postings on this topic, but it's clear it's a controversial idea among fans. Hasbro seems to think it's a great idea to partner with Ebay for auctions of scarce figures like Jorg Sacul, the Toy Fair Vader and the R2. Popper said it would be financially impossible for the company to redeem the points directly because of the millions in circulation. The program is to launch in Sept and have a three month trial period in the US only. He recommended getting in the game early, but to make sure, if you're bidding on more than one item, that you actually have all the points needed in case you win. You won't have to have receipts for the items the points came from.

He then gave a presentation on the figures for 2003 and 2004. In 2004 there will only be one line; the separate Clone Wars line will end. There will be 3 - 4 new figures a month with a theme in each wave. In the 2003 3 3/4 figures there will be a distinct color scheme for each army. He showed pictures of Yoda as a general, Anakin and Obi-Wan in battle dress, an ARC trooper, and Mace. There will also be figures of the new characters Durge, the bounty hunter that will take Jango Fett's place, and Asajj Ventress, a dark Jedi. There will be 3 packs with different versions of Clonetroopers and droid armies. New vehicles will

include the Hailfire droid, Anakin's souped-up starfighter and a command gunship. There will be new packaging for Saga characters that will include Bail Organa, Padme, an imperial dignitary, and a McQuarrie version stormtrooper. A Boba Fett unleashed is also planned. There will be scene packs for the Jedi Council and the Geonosian war room. Many of these new figures were on display in the Hasbro booth. You can see pictures of some of the new figures at the Hasbro website: <http://www.hasbro.com/starwars/pl/page.headlines/id.948/dn/default.cfm>. Mr. Popper said Hasbro is committed to the Star Wars line and was pleased to be able to extend its license to 2018.

At the end of the presentation the issue of availability came up again when people asked if Hasbro would ever sell directly to the public. Mr. Popper said no. He was asked if the assortments shipped to online dealers could be made more collector friendly, maybe packing all the short packed or fan choice figures together. He said that people should contact Hasbro with their concerns about all the issues raised during the discussion.

The next panel was on Dark Horse Star Wars comics. It included Randy Stradley, the head of the entire Dark Horse line of Star Wars books, Dave Land, the editor of SW Tales, Doug Weekly who will be doing the comic of Ep. III, and Haden Blackman of LucasArts who has been writing for the Republic series and SW Galaxies games. Paul Chadwick, editor of the Empire series, had had a death in the family and couldn't attend. They talked about

upcoming titles and how excited they were with how the Star Wars line was going. This included plans for a comic version of the upcoming Clone Wars cartoons written by Haden that should appear in January. There will be some Anakin one shots, new villains, and a book they subtitled Ayla vs Aurra. The Tales series will have an issue devoted to the dark side, and one to Boba Fett. Someone asked about the Infinities line and they said they were having problems figuring out how to do RotJ! Someone else asked if they ever planned to do a 'best of Dark Horse art' book. They said one was in development.

The next presentation was on the five-year arc of the New Jedi Order series of Del Rey novels. The panel included Matt Stover who wrote Traitor and Shatterpoint; Greg Keyes, author of the popular Briar King and the next to the last in the NJO series, Final Prophecy; Troy Denning author of Star by Star and Tatooine Ghosts; and Aaron Allston, who wrote Rebel Dream and Rebel Stand. R. A. Salvator, who started the NJO line with Vector Prime, was the moderator. The guys all knew each other and joked among themselves about what it was like to write fiction about franchised characters in 'shared worlds,' dealing with continuity problems and having to finish story arcs started by others. R. A. began his presentation by saying it wasn't his idea to kill Chewie. He was told he had to and has had to live with fan anger ever since. Troy Denning agreed, saying he was told to kill Anakin, that the series wouldn't work if he had lived. They all agreed it's a challenge to write stories in a universe with such strict rules, but they all said they'd enjoyed the experience.

There was an interesting discussion about where they get their ideas. Matt Stover admitted that when he wrote *Traitor* he first thought of duplicating the relationship Luke had had with Yoda in his treatment of Jacen and Vergere. Then he decided to make Vergere more like a Zen master, enigmatic, not clear whose side she's on. It was basically a hero's journey into the underworld. He was surprised when Lucas approved the idea. *Shatterpoint* was inspired by the movie *Apocalypse Now*. Aaron Allston said the battle for Bastion in his book was based on WWII battles. There will be a post NJO trilogy but what it will be will depend on who is left alive in the SW universe!

After this panel I scurried over to the big theater hall for what was described in the program as "Lucasfilm Star Wars Show—The Clones Wars have begun—what's next? Join Lucasfilm's head of fan relations, Steve Sansweet, and a galaxy of guests to get the latest report on *Star Wars: Episode III*. What's up Down Under as production proceeds? As for what to do until 2005—the Clone Wars are upon us, in a series of animated TV shorts, comics, novels, videogames, toys, and online materials. Find out all about it from the people most involved, including animation superstar Genndy Tartakovsky of Cartoon Network." It had sounded really good, but turned out to be rather dry. It consisted of representatives talking about their products, essentially repeating what had been discussed in earlier panels.

Paul Ens, director of content for the SW website talked about

Hyperspace, showed some video clips of welcome from Lucas and McCallum and a rather stiff 'tour' by Anthony Daniels of the Ep III sets. Lisa Stevens, president of Paizo Publishing, the new owner of the SW fan club, talked about her goals for the club. Betsy Mitchell of Del Rey Books talked about the plans for six Clone Wars books leading up to Ep III. She also said the New Jedi Order series with its 19 novels, the last of which will be The Unifying Force, was unprecedented in publishing history. Steve Siffle, talked about the nonfiction books on SW. Randy Stradley, head of Dark Horse's SW line, repeated comments made in his panel about upcoming comic books. Justin Lambrosi of LucasArts talked about SW games and showed some cool clips, the best part of the entire two hour presentation. Jeff Popper repeated his comments about upcoming Hasbro toys. Then finally Genndy Tartakovsky, creator of Samurai Jack and Dexter's Laboratory, talked about plans for the upcoming Clone Wars three minute epic cartoons on the Cartoon Network. He didn't show the first episode though. He saved that for his panel later that day. All in all, the Star Wars Show was a bit of a disappointment, newsy but dry.

At 4:30, I went back over to room 9 where all the other SW panels had been for the presentation on "Star Wars Fiction: How Do They Keep it Straight?— It's called "continuity," and keeping the ever-expanding Star Wars galaxy coherent and related is a big job, shared by Lucasfilm, its authors, artists, and licensees. Find out from the folks who do it how many times they've awakened in a cold sweat over a misplaced rancor or

dewback." I only listened to the first part. It seemed like a repetition of what had been discussed in the NJO panel.

I tried to get in to see the premiere of *Batman: Mystery of the Batwoman* animated feature, but the room was full. So I went back downstairs to the exhibit hall to continue my goody hunt. Of all places, the Dark Horse booth had a bank of what looked like gum ball machines but that held plastic 'eggs' containing Simpson and Lord of the Ring busts. I had heard about the little LotR toys, but had never seen them. It was a challenge finding the 4 quarters required to get each egg and then I never knew what I would be getting. I finally gave up and bought a complete set of the LotR: Fellowship busts at another booth.

At 6 pm, I went back upstairs for what was billed as "Cartoon Network: Star Wars: Clone Wars— Star Wars Day at Comic-Con concludes with this sneak peek at a new facet of the legend: On Friday, November 10, Cartoon Network unveils *Star Wars: Clone Wars*, an epic microseries from Genndy Tartakovsky, creator of *Dexter's Laboratory* and *Samurai Jack*. *Star Wars: Clone Wars* continues the saga where the live action feature film *Star Wars: Episode II, Attack of the Clones* left off—at the beginning of the Clone Wars, an epic civil war that pits the old Republic against a vast separatist movement led by the forces of evil. As *Clone Wars* unfolds, the valiant Jedi Knights lead the Republic's Clone Army against many new and ruthless adversaries across the galaxy. These new characters, epic battles and intricate stories will add an exciting new dimension to the

Star Wars saga. Panelists include Genndy Tartakovsky, producer/director; Paul Rudish, art director; Scott Wills, art director, Bryan Andrews, storyboard artist; and Mark Andrews, storyboard artist." This turned out to be a very interesting talk, but the best part was the airing of the first episode. It was great! The audience was so enthusiastic that they showed it again. It's amazing how much content can be in a 3 minute segment. I'm really looking forward to the series this fall.

To end the very long, busy day, I went to the follow-up to Mark Hamill's presentation from last year. The program said: "Mark Hamill Wants to Give You a Sneak Peek at Comic Book: The Movie — Last year fans were blown away by the "Mark Hamill Wants You in His Movie" panel that featured the voices behind the Joker, Spongebob Squarepants, Jimmy Neutron, Bugs Bunny, Winnie the Pooh, and every hot cartoon on television. In addition to being part of the filming of the climatic scene of Comic Book: The Movie, they were treated to over four hours of the most amazing stories, impressions, music, and a Q & A session featuring the most famous voice-over artists in animation today. This year, Mark Hamill and the core cast of Comic Book: The Movie return to the scene of the crime to share exclusive scenes and outtakes from the movie which Miramax Films is releasing this Fall. Joining Hamill on the panel are Donna D'Errico (Baywatch), Billy West (Futurama, Ren & Stimpy), Roger Rose (Johnny Bravo), Jess Harnell (Animaniacs), Tom Kenny (Spongebob Squarepants), Lori Alan (Spongebob Squarepants), Daran Norris (Fairly Odd Parents),

Gary Owens (Laugh-in, Space Ghost), Jim Cummings (Winnie the Pooh), Rob Paulsen (Pinky and the Brain), Debbi Derryberry (Jimmy Neutron) and many others!" I don't remember Gary Owens being there, but there were a bunch of people and a lively discussion. Every member of the audience, most of whom had been part of last year's program, received a Comic Book: The Movie t-shirt.

Saturday, July 19

Even though I was exhausted from the previous day's non-stop action, Smoot and I got up at 5:30 so we could get ready and get over to the Marriott for the Fan Club Breakfast with Jeremy Bulloch by 7 am. I sat with fellow Fed member Peter Bateson. If you read the reports on the event, at the last minute Daniel Logan, young Fett, was also scheduled to appear and sign autographs. The cost of the breakfast included a signed Fett figure. Once again, I dragged Smoot with me to get an additional figure. I also paid for each of us to get a signature from Daniel. I took the young Fett AOTC action figure and the hardcover book with his picture on it for Daniel to sign. Jeremy was gracious as always. I asked him if his wife enjoyed traveling with him. He said since his sons were grown, she was free to come with him and did enjoy it. Even though he had been signing Fett figures continuously the previous day, he not only signed but let people take pictures of him too. Galactic Hunter has lots of photos from the breakfast.

After doing his duty, Smoot took the signed collectibles and

went back to our hotel room to continue watching the British Open. When the breakfast was over, before 9 am, I walked back over to the convention center to stand in still another line waiting for the doors to open at 10. I didn't even try to see Halle Berry at the Warner Brothers presentation in the auditorium from 10:30 to 11:30 nor Angelina Jolie at the Tomb Raider preview from 11:30 to 12:30. The lines were so huge, it was impossible.

Instead I attended two presentations that dealt with what the convention had been about when it started, comics. The first was on "Gold Key and Dell Comics— Once upon a time, Western Publishing had the most successful line of comic books ever, ranging from Disney titles to movie and TV tie-ins to Magnus, Robot Fighter. Panelists who will explore the history of Western Publishing/Dell/Gold Key include Len Wein (Star Trek), Paul Norris (Tarzan), Frank Bolle (The Twilight Zone), Mike Royer (Magnus, Robot Fighter), and Maggie Thompson (Comics Buyer's Guide). Hosted by Mark Evanier (Scooby Doo, Bugs Bunny, Woody Woodpecker, etc.)" The second was billed as the "10th Annual Golden Age Panel -The tenth annual gathering of the greatest artists of the greatest generation focuses this year on DC, with the co-creators of Aquaman, Flash, and Green Lantern (Paul Norris, Harry Lampert, and Mart Nodell) plus Irwin Hasen (Wildcat), Howie Post (Anthro), Murphy Anderson (Hawkman), and super-editor Julius Schwartz. Moderated by Mark Evanier." There were probably around 40 people in the audience, but they were all true fans. It was fascinating listening to the panelists,

most of them men, now in their 70s or 80s, who had been part of what is considered the high point in the history of comics. An article on the Comic Con website (<http://www.comic-con.org/Pages/CCIComics.html>) may be a sign of some defensiveness on the topic of comics. It noted that "with 287 programs in the daytime hours of Comic-Con, comic fans can count on 167 having something to do with the comics medium." What it didn't say was that the programs dealing directly with comics probably had the fewest audience members, while the media events had thousands. Case in point -

At 12:30, Smoot joined me for the presentation on Stargate SG-1. According to the program: Currently in production on a seventh all-new season with Michael Shanks returning as a regular cast member, Stargate SG-1 follows Air Force Colonel Jack O'Neill (Richard Dean Anderson) and his team as they travel through the Stargate—an ancient portal that allows instantaneous travel across the galaxy—to explore the uncharted regions of the universe and save the Earth from destruction. An exclusive Stargate SG-1 raffle will be held at the end of the panel so make sure to stop by! Panelists include Amanda Tapping ("Major Samantha Carter"), Don Davis ("General George Hammond"), and Martin Wood, director." It was a very enjoyable presentation. Amanda Tapping and Don Davis are a hoot, even though the characters they play are very serious. The group has been together so long, they are like a family. They were happy to have Michael back and are excited about their 7th year. The big surprise was the announcement that they've been

picked up for an 8th year! They brought videotaped greetings from Richard Dean Anderson, Michael Shanks and Christopher Judge. They were surprised at the number of people who showed up. It was in one of the larger sets of rooms and was filled almost to capacity. They had brought goody bags, but there weren't enough for everyone. They did have enough DVDs of the 100th episode that had been made to celebrate that milestone. They also had a raffle for some Stargate hats, jackets and even the large posters on display in the room. We only ended up with the DVD.

Smoot hadn't had a chance to really look around the exhibit hall so after the Stargate presentation, he went downstairs and I wandered over to the Star Trek panel. The program said: " Do You Have What It Takes to Pitch and Write for Star Trek?— Do you believe you have what it takes to write for Enterprise? Can you help Berman and Braga bring Archer's crew through the Expanse and back to Earth safely? If your answer is yes, then run, don't walk, to this panel. Dr. Joseph D. Di Lella (coming off a successful nine-part article series on www.trektoday.com on writing fundamentals for the short story, book, and TV formats) has brought along top veteran Trek writers to share their secrets: D. C. Fontana (original series and Next Generation writer), Eric Stillwell (TNG's, Yesterday's Enterprise, and current associate producer for The Dead Zone), Keith de Candido (author of many Star Trek books and short stories for Simon & Schuster), Harry "Doc" Kloor (Voyager's "Drone" and several others), Jimmy Diggs (freelance writer of seven DS9 and Voyager

stories), Jack Trevino (DS9's Little Green Men), and Steve Fratt (pitchman to four Trek series)." It wasn't as interesting as I'd hoped so I sat in on the last part of the panel on The Secret to Good Animation Design. The real reason I went to it was that it was in the same room where the next presentation I wanted to hear was going to be and I was too tired to wander around anymore.

Once again, Forrest J. Ackerman, Julius Swartz and Ray Bradbury were to be on a panel discussing their many years in sci fi and comics. I had really enjoyed their panel last year and had been looking forward to hearing them again. Unfortunately, Ray Bradbury is now confined to a wheelchair and the con hadn't made arrangements for getting him up on the stage so he had to remain on the floor, unable to hear what the other panelists had to say. As a result, the discussion was awkward and not as spontaneous as last year.

Smoot and I, being old fogies, were running out of steam. We decided to stay for one more presentation. It was billed as "Cartoon Voice Actors — A demonstration of the fine art of performing for animation, with readings by the masters. The cast may include Mark Hamill, Billy West, Gregg Berger, Roger Rose, Jess Harnell, Bob Bergen, Gary Owens, Greg Berg, Kathy Garver, Joe Alaskey, Maurice LaMarche, and many more! Hosted by Mark Evanier." Once again, I don't think Gary Owens was there, but the ones who were put on a great show. It's amazing what they can do with their voices. They each did their

trademark voices, including the guy who now does Porky Pig. As a teenager he had asked to apprentice with Mel Blanc and finally took over for him not long before his death. Billy West, who does Wacko on the Animaniacs, entertained the crowd by doing the voices of all four Beatles. The panelists also did an unrehearsed reading of one of the Fractured Fairytales from The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show and Rob Paulsen, who voiced Pinky and Maurice LaMarche who voiced the Brain, read an episode of Pinky and The Brain. Both were really funny and showed the amazing range of skills of the voice actors. Speaking of famous voices, at the previous night's presentation by Mark Hamill about his upcoming movie, he admitted he'd had a sore throat last year and wasn't able to do his famous Joker laugh. His throat was up to it this year so he had shown us how he did it. At the voice actors panel, he explained why he had not done the voice for Luke on the third BBC radio adaptation. He had agreed to do the voice on the first two because they were done by a non-profit group. The third one was not and he didn't want to participate. One of the other guys on the panel did Luke's voice for the adaptation. He made sure we knew he did Luke Skywalker's voice, not Mark Hamill's!

The big event of Saturday night is The Masquerade, the annual on-stage costume competition. We weren't able to get into the auditorium last year and watched it on the overflow screen in the autographs room. It was kind of strange so we decided to skip it this year. We had supper at our hotel and turned in early.

Sunday, July 20

Smoot got up around 5:30 am to watch the last day of the British Open. I had looked over the con schedule and decided there really wasn't anything I just had to see that day, so I didn't even go to the convention center. Around 11, we packed up and started our long drive back to Scottsdale.

General Impressions about the Con

The exhibit hall was even bigger and more overwhelming than last year. The con took the entire convention center this year and was still more crowded than last year. The security seemed more surly. Maybe because of that and the fact it was the second time I'd been, it didn't seem quite as exciting and fun as last year. There were some great presentations, but I don't know whether I'll go again next year. The focus seems to have shifted even further from being mainly about comics and the study of popular arts to being about big budget media, autographs and artificially limited exclusive collectibles. Last year there was a panel for comics professionals entitled "What do you tell the person sitting next to you on the plane what you do for a living," which seemed to indicate a little reluctance or embarrassment to admit to being an adult who was still 'into' comic books. But after all the big budget movies that have come out in the last year based on comic book characters, comics are now hot, worthy of the notice of Hollywood types and bean counters. That's a big difference in one year. Needless to say, there wasn't a panel with that title this year. Maybe as I get further away from the weekend, the fun things will start to predominate in my memory.

Months after last year's con I read the official review of the 2002 event on the Comic Con website. It was like the three blind men and the elephant. The experience the reviewer had was completely different from what I had had. But with the 600 hours of programming over the four days, it's not surprising people would have such different experiences. All I can talk about is what I did. But if you go to the con site and read over the online program, you can see how much I didn't do, how much more there was than what I experienced. I'll be curious to see what others say about their experiences of Comic Con International 2003. It might be as interesting as the con itself.

My photos from the con are at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/mLHAEWwuFNgj9isb6>.

