



COURIER photo/Gabriel Fenoy

Sean Patty draws a character from his comic book series Worgard: Viking Berserker during Saturday's convention. Mr. Patty is also the creator of Battle Ground Victory, an independent publishing and distribution company out of Rancho Cucamonga.

## The world of comics arrives at the Packing House

Hundreds of comic book fans and pop culture enthusiasts caught a glimpse of what will be a monthly occasion during the first Comic Book and Pop Culture Convention last Saturday.

A plethora of comic books, collectibles, games and artwork were spread out along the walkway of the Packing House throughout the day—attracting people of all ages.

"I'm pleased with the turnout," said Chris Peterson, former owner of the Comic Bookie shop. "I had built up an email list over the last couple decades so it was easy to let the local community know about this. We're just getting things warmed up [with this event] and I think we're off to a good start."

Vendors at the event included Comic Madness, Gameology and the Christian Comic Arts Association (CCAA) as well as illustrators Frank Grau, Rob Zailo and Sean Patty. Spiderman, Iron Man and Superman were just a sampling of the fantasy heroes featured in comic books, graphic novels, games and posters at the various vendors.

Mr. Peterson and CEO of Edge of L.A. Productions Inc. Eric von Wodtke organized the event. The monthly venture is Mr. Peterson's new project after the closing of Comic Bookie in October.

While the former comic book shop owner regrets closing his store, he is equally thrilled about giving comic book fans a venue to take part every 3rd Saturday of the month. Mr. Peterson is optimistic about the event's ability to be a consistent draw.

"We'll see what happens," he said. "I think there is a demand for this. We had been talking with the people at the Packing House about a way to get more foot traffic and this is a way to do it. There's a huge comic book convention in San Diego every year and there is also one held in Los Angeles. This is much more local."

Lee Krause, the owner of Comic Madness in Chino, regularly participates in conventions throughout the United States. According to Mr. Krause, the solid turnout for the initial event is a good sign for future showings.

"This has been quite a success—there were a lot of people that came through to check it out," Mr. Krause said. "I believe there is even more of an interest in comics, especially with many of them now being turned into movies. Having the comic books stories projected on the movie screen has been a good relationship."



COURIER photo/Gabriel Fenoy

Standing next to a familiar superhero, Claremont residents Nathan Landman, left, and Eitan Hershkovitz flip through boxes of comic books on Saturday inside the Packing House.

Gameology owner Dave Holt believes gaming falls in alignment with the comic book culture. Mr. Holt used the convention as an opportunity to inform the public about his store, which he says tends to be mistaken for a video game shop.

"Some comic fans are gamers and some games are based on comics, so there is a lot of crossover stuff between the 2 genres," the Gameology owner explained. "It's been good to show people that there is more to gaming than Toys "R" Us."

Mr. Holt pointed out the benefit of board games as a cheaper alternative to other forms of family entertainment.

"I've had people tell me that they've spent \$100 to go the movies with their family," he said. "With a board game, you pay \$35 for nearly the same amount of entertainment and then it's something you can repeat over and over again for free."

Clad in Batman attire, comic book enthusiast Aaron Blossom was excited to attend the local convention. The 23-year-old Fontana resident began reading comics at an early age and said comics are what influenced him to go into film.

"Batman and Ironman are my favorite comic book characters because in the comics they are among the few characters that don't have superpowers—they depend on their intellect and hard work ethic," Mr. Blossom said. "Chris [Peterson] told me about this event and I dusted off my costume and decided to put it on. I'm sad to hear of Chris' shop go down but I'm glad he's doing this."

Mr. Blossom's girlfriend Emylee Wang dressed as DC Comics character Zatanna—a stage illusionist with magical powers. Her interest in comics began when she started dating Mr. Blossom.

"I enjoy going to conventions with him and dressing up," she said. "I've been wearing costumes now for 3 years. The conventions are really cool and I love how celebrities will show up and just the overall atmosphere. Because of how people embrace those events, I feel like I'm one with everybody there."

The next convention will take place on January 17.