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CONVENTION REPORT:
2007 LOS ANGELES WIZARD WORLD
BY SARAH BEACH

This is the fourth year that Wizard World has tackled Los Angeles, and the second time actually in the LA Convention Center. I admit, I prefer the LA Center to the Long Beach one where the first two were held - mainly because of proximity and better parking.

FRIDAY, March 16

I got myself down to the Convention Center and parked in the South Hall parking, since South Hall was where the convention had been last year. Mistake No. 1. This year, Wizard World was in the West Hall, which meant a trudge the distance of the Concourse to the actual exhibit floor. Mistake No. 2: I wore brand new shoes. I hadn't taken many steps away from my car when I knew these were the wrong things to wear, especially for a convention. Live and learn. On I went.

I got through registration moderately quickly. Yet, as I was pinning my badge on, I noticed that they had mistyped my first name. The final /H/ had been dropped off, leaving me "Sara Beach". It's surprising how territorial one can be about the spelling of one's name. It's also humbling, in the sense of keeping you from over-inflating your ego.

Since the programming (such as it was) didn't begin until 1 p.m., I strolled into the exhibit hall to do an initial look-around.

My friends from Golden Apple Comics had a very nicely set up booth toward the front of the hall. They also had a very interesting schedule of events planned for their booth, with various

writers and artists doing signings there. They were also hosting a visit by the Guinness Book of World Records, which was going to present a certificate for the "largest comic book in the world" for a super-sized edition of the comic book the rock group KISS were launching. Attendees could get copies of the super-sized edition for a mere \$50. Guinness and Gene Simmons would be on hand later during the con for that event. But at this moment, shortly after the hall had opened, I could chat with the proprietor Ryan about their preparations. He was going to be quite busy the rest of the weekend, supervising their little "con within the con".

Across the aisle from the Golden Apple booth was the booth for Graphitti, which had an impressive display of DC licensed t-shirts. Chatting with the proprietor was Editor in Chief of DC Comics, Dan DiDio. DC had elected not to have a booth at the con this year, so DiDio was footloose. He looked a shade at a loss for not having any territory to lord over, but it was mixed with a glee at being able to roam free. I elected not to overstay my "face time welcome" with him this early in the con, and so drifted off.

At 1 p.m., I headed to the Top Cow panel. I don't read much from Top Cow, but there wasn't much in the way of counter-programming, so I went to see what they were presenting. A video game based on *The Darkness*. Anime and manga versions of *Witchblade*. And then they did a presentation of Paul Dini's new project, *Madame Mirage* which actually intrigued me, enough for me to put the first issue (at least) on my list of things to check out.

After killing some time between events of interest, at 3, I attended a presentation by the filmmakers of *Razor Sharp*. Since screenwriting (and hence filmmaking) is one of my interests, I was curious about folks who chose to make a 20 minute action film. This was a very interesting panel, with a well-honed presentation. Hearing the story of how they put the film together was fascinating. And seeing short bits of the footage intrigued me about the film itself. Their hopes, of course, are to parlay the short film into a feature film - and comics and games. Based on all the planning and conceptualizing they had in the presentation, I won't be surprised if they succeed. The film itself would be screened the next day. I decided I would certainly be seeing it.

At 4:30, I sat in on the panel from Aspen Comics. Again, I don't read their books, but it was certainly an engaging presentation. Enough to make me consider exploring their line. (And around here, my feet were hurting so much, I took off my shoes and decided to go barefoot until/unless someone told me not to.)

At 6 came the highlight for me: the DC Nation panel. Okay, I admit it. I grew up on DC Comics and so prefer them. They are what I do know best in the comic book field. Dan DiDio, Bob Wayne (VP of Sales) and Jimmy Palmiotti fielded questions from readers about various aspects of the DCU. Complaints were voiced about various things, hints were dropped about upcoming

things, teasing was tossed back and forth. (Don't expect me to give you a news digest of what was said, there are websites devoted to such things - this is just about my experience of the con.) I have to give DiDio credit for keeping such panels lively and engaging. They are not boring at all, when he's running the show. The panel wrapped up and as we exited, everyone received the four buttons for this year's "event" campaign.

I hiked back to my car barefoot, enjoying the cool floors of the convention center, and the polished concrete of the parking structure. To the sounds of the squick, squick of tires turning on the polished concrete, I put on my old shoes, and headed out for the evening, dreaming of being able to put my feet up and relax once I got home.

SATURDAY, March 17

I headed down to the Convention Center, intending to get into the "right" parking this time. It was a good thing I intended to be early as it took 25 minutes to just get around the block into the parking structure. By the time I was parked, it was shortly before the first programming event, which I wanted to attend.

At 11 a.m., the IDW panel got rolling. Editor in Chief Chris Ryall oversaw the presentations, covering their plans for 2007. Some very intriguing *Star Trek* projects coming up. One in particular caught my attention as worth checking out: drawing from the Original Series, they're doing comic book versions of each story where Klingons appeared – from the Klingons' point of view. Should be fun, especially the Tribbles episode. They wrapped up that part of their presentation in a half hour, because their other "big thing" would take the remaining time. Gene Simmons and his son Nick are launching a comic line with IDW (not to be confused with the KISS material being done with Platinum Studios), a line that would focus on horror stories. Gene entered, accompanied by the A&E cameras (for *Family Jewels*), and they got into their project rather quickly. I'm not sure what I expected, since I don't follow KISS, or Simmons' career or show. But I was agreeably surprised by him. Articulate, intelligent, and on top of what he wanted these comic books to be, he impressed me. And although horror books aren't really my thing, a couple of the titles seemed worth trying out (to me, that is). It was a pretty good hour.

From there, I moved on to where the second DC panel of the weekend was supposed to be. But it was delayed. The previous tenants of the room, a panel for the show *Heroes* was still going on. And on. And on. Maybe they thought they had an hour and 15 minutes allotted to them. I don't know. (I admit, I thought the con staff wasn't as sharp as they could have been. But then my standards for such thing were set by the San Diego ComicCon folk who rule their rooms with fists of iron.) Eventually that panel wrapped up and they flowed out, while all the DC fans

flowed in.

Once again, DiDio took center stage, this time assisted not just by Bob Wayne and Jimmy Palmiotti, but also by Bill Willingham, Marv Wolfman, Amanda Conner (although she didn't say much, a fact that was turned into a comedy routine briefly). Hmm. I think I'm forgetting at least two other people. The panel led off with some discussion (without substance) about the upcoming "Countdown", with reference to "World War III" and "Amazons Attack". All teaser stuff, of course. More sport was had in fans asking questions of the panel and getting some answers back - not always answers of information, but nothing boring. DiDio took the opportunity that he often does on such occasions, and asked questions back of the fans. After another lively hour of this entertainment, the panel wrapped up.

I dawdled in the exit line (it was moving slowly because folks were once again getting the buttons as they exited), since I gaged it as an opportunity to make some face time with DiDio. As my part of the line approached the corner where DiDio was chatting with fans that paused, I watched to aspirants talk to him. One Earnest Writer asked how someone broke in with DC. Beside him, another eager beaver had a CD in hand, and wanted to give it to DiDio. DiDio very carefully (but firmly) told CD Guy that he doesn't accept things at cons, because he loses them. It's a practical consideration. Given how much stuff the ordinary fan carries around at a con, it's hardly surprising that comic book power brokers themselves don't want to be encumbered themselves. (And really, if you're trying to break into the business, you want your submission to be considered seriously. And that's not going to happen when the object is dropped into the midst of the Big Guy's own convention loot. Conventions are for face time, when you're trying to break in.) To Earnest Writer, DiDio urged him to get into print in an independent comic book, to learn the ropes that way, because he preferred to see things in print first. As he said this, he moved into the flow toward the door, and I was right on the spot. It gave me the opportunity to make some chit-chat, which I did (you don't really need to know the specifics of it) - it connected to an encounter I'd had with him last year. It was a small thing, but it was face time.

Once out of the room, I had a big chunk of time before the next bit of programming that interested me. I took a break, got a beverage, and relaxed for a bit.

I then strolled into the exhibit hall. The Golden Apple booth was a beehive of activity. There were plenty of other attractions at booths. I drifted to the back of the hall toward Artists Alley. There were a couple of people I sort of wanted to speak to. But when I got back to their assigned tables, they weren't there. Turns out, they'd been coming from New York City, and their flights had been cancelled by the snow storm that had hit there. ("Snowstorm?" I thought.

I hadn't paid attention to national weather since Thursday morning.) But Marv Wolfman was ensconced at his table, signing fans copies of his work. He also had some scripts from his recent *Nightwing* issues for sale. I paused there to hob-nob.

He was chatting with a gentlemen, who turned out to be Nat Gertler (whose posts on Gail Simone's CBR message board I have read). We shook hands, now that we were getting to put faces to posts. Nat had with him a proof copy of a book he'd been working on, of some of Charles Schultz' non-"Peanuts" work, and he let me glance through it. Very interesting. The three of us then engaged in the business-card-exchange. I still haven't gotten very practiced at that. As an aside to this, a fourth person who had come in on the end of this, asked Marv if he could have one of Marv's cards. Marv said that he exchanges cards only with fellow pros - because he's concerned about over-wrought fans possibly showing up on his doorstep. Fourth Party explained that he was a writer trying to break in, so Marv unbent and graciously gave him his card.

About this point, I noticed that Marv doesn't wear a watch. It was going on 3, and Marv had a session at 4 about writing. So I asked him if he'd like me to come back and get him before his presentation, so he could get upstairs on time. He brightened up and thanked me.

I whiled away the hour, and then headed back to Marv's table with a good 20 minutes to spare. Good thing I gave him that much cushion - there were folks to stop and chat with, including encountering Dan DiDio who was making his final circuit of the exhibit hall. Turned out that DiDio was planning on heading back to NYC on Sunday. So I hung on the fringe of the conversation, and chirped in with a quip. (More face time.) Then Marv wanted to snag a beverage - and I did too, actually. There was a stand on the hall floor, so we both hit that before heading upstairs to the room.

Marv's take on writing was refreshing, for one big reason. His take is that outside the rules of grammar, there are no rules to storytelling, when it comes to story structure. I might not go quite that far, but I do think that flexibility is very important. And that writers should not be afraid of attempting the unusual. He spent a good deal of time talking about characterization, and how drama can grow out of the nature of the characters. He gave me some things to mull over - which is always a good thing.

From there, I headed to the screening of *Razor Sharp*. And quite a good piece it was. Very tight storytelling in 20 minutes. So satisfying was it, that I'm going to look into getting a copy of it. Even if they do get their feature film deal, I'd still want to have this at hand. It is that good. For

such a short film, they've created a smart, appealing heroine, a rather rich context and backstory, and a very good problem for her to face and deal with.

After that, home again. And since there wasn't really anything for Sunday afternoon that enticed me, that's the end of my Wizard World LA 2007 excursion.