



2014 Philadelphia Comic Con Had Plenty of Character(s)

by [Howard Whitman](#) on June 23, 2014 at 6:53 pm

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Have you heard the one about Dr. Doom getting on a train?

No joke; that was the sight that greeted me as I rode Philadelphia's regional rail down to center city Philly for the 2014 installment of what has become the city's unofficial Comic Con: Wizard World.

Prior to spotting Dr. Doom on the train, my 2014 Wizard World experience began on the night before the show opened—Wednesday, June 18—at a pre-con party held at Xfinity Live, an attraction based in Philly's sports stadium/arena



You know you're heading to Comic Con when Dr. Doom boards your train.



area—think of it as a “food court with bars.”

The party not only offered press folks like myself the opportunity to get our press wristbands early; it also promised the chance to get interviews with the celebrities that were going to attend: *The Walking Dead* bad guy Michael Rooker, a popular *Power Ranger* (he was the green one, then the white one, then ...) Jason David Frank, and *The Incredible Hulk* himself, Lou Ferrigno. (*Angel* star David Boreanaz was reportedly going to show up, but he didn't as far as I could tell.)

And while Ferrigno did sit down for one-on-one chats with journalists, Rooker was doing a sort of “speed-dating” series of interviews with reporters who approached him at the event's meet and greet area. He was chatty and responsive to anyone who put a camera or digital recorder in his face. Frank—who focuses on mixed martial arts these days—was cordial to any party-goer who approached him for an autograph or photo.

Nice party, and a good way to kick things off. But of course, the real action began the next day, Thursday 6/19, when the con proper opened at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in the heart of Center City. I managed to get an hour in on the show floor after work, and got back down to the city (via the aforementioned train ride) on Saturday June 21.

Here, in no particular order, are some observations from my time at this year's Philly Comic Con:

- I can't think of another convention (except for, most likely, a gun show) where there is an actual “Weapons Inspection” table at the front entrance. See, the folks who show up in costume often do so with props—and since the characters they're emulating are action heroes, there will be plenty of fake swords and guns and light sabers, etc. Non-firing (i.e., fake) weapons are permitted as per Wizard World's entry policies, but it's good thing they check every bit of hardware that walks in the con's doors.



The *Walking Dead*'s Michael Rooker does the speed-dating interview thing.

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• Along those lines, there were certainly plenty of weaponry options for sale on the show floor. Retailers specializing in fake (I hope) guns and samurai swords were attracting some good traffic on the floor. People don't just come to Comic Cons to buy comics—they also want *props*.

• As is commonplace for these shows, there were a number of celebrities present at this year's Comic Con to do signings and meet-and-greets. Keep in mind that these are typically for money. The going rate was usually \$40 for an autograph and \$55 for a photograph with the star. In theory, you could wait in line to meet Eliza Dushku from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and not pay anything—but I got the impression most, if not all, of the people in these lines were ready to pony up cash for a signature and/or photo. Celebrities there were not just from the sci-fi or superhero worlds, as one might expect. Movie stars such as Ralph Macchio (yes, Daniel-san from *The Karate Kid*, who still looks like he's 17) or Curtis Armstrong (best known as Booger from *Revenge of the Nerds*) had booths alongside the 11th *Dr. Who* Matt Smith, Whoopi Goldberg of *Ghost* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Nathan Fillion from *Firefly*, Evan Peters of *X-Men: Days of Future Past* and *American Horror Story*, lots of guys from *The Walking Dead*, and many more genre notables.

• One's autograph price is apparently a sign of showbiz status or something along those lines. I'm not judging, but while most celebs were getting at least \$40 for a signature, Booger's was marked down to \$20.

• My own celebrity encounter for the day was with the cast of my all-time favorite reality show, AMC's *Comic Book Men*. It was very appropriate that they were there, since their store (Jay and Silent Bob's Secret Stash, owned by filmmaker Kevin Smith) is based in not-too-far Red Bank, N.J., and it is a comic con, after all. As

they didn't attract the big lines that folks like



Former Power Ranger Jason David Frank posed for pics with partygoers.



Festival closing spot



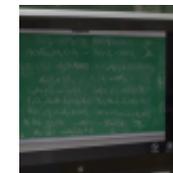
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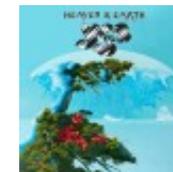
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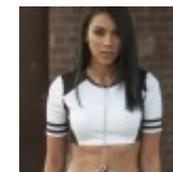
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Filion, Smith or anyone from *The Walking Dead* did, the three comic book men—Mike Zupcic, Ming Chen and Bryan Johnson—were very approachable. And cool. Nice to speak with. And I didn't even have to pay for the honor. FYI, the show will come back on for a new season in October when *The Walking Dead* resumes—*Comic Book Men* is tied to *Walking Dead* due to the latter's comic book roots, which, according to Johnson, works out well for their program. By the way, as con goers are not supposed to take photos of celebs who are selling the privilege, Zupcic, Chen and Johnson came up with their own spin on the Andrew Garfield/Emma Stone “hold up signs to ward off paparazzi” tactic. In their case, the three comic book men held up their own handmade signs telling unauthorized photo-takers they were cheapskates, and offering statements such as “I watch you sleep.” Clever stuff. And, for the record, Chen's autograph price was marked down to \$1.50, although I believe (hope) that was a joke.

- The cosplay (costume play) angle that's become such a significant part of comic con attendance continues to attract more women to what's historically been a boy's club. Harley Quinn continues to be a strong go-to for the ladies, but there was a vast variety of costumes on display. Cosplay is one of the most fun things about comic con—taking part in it and seeing it. I always get a kick out of seeing Batman trying to manage the logistics of ordering at the snack bar or entering the men's room, and it's a laff to see a fake Joel from *Mystery Science Theater 3000* sharing a smoke with Green Lantern by the front entrance.

- This show attracted its fair share of noted comic book artists, and you don't have to pay to meet them either—although some do charge for their signatures, which is understandable as their John Hancock makes a comic issue more valuable! Legendary Batman artist Neal Adams—



Comic Book Men star Ming Chen (who didn't know I took his photo).



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who was instrumental in bringing back the dark version of the character in the 1970s—was there, chatting with attendees, sketching and signing. The current artist on DC's flagship Batman title, Greg Capullo, was also there, in the Artists' Alley section, doing the same.



Batman artist Greg Capullo signed comics—for free!

- Comic Con provides a great opportunity for bargain hunters to get some steals. Sure, there are plenty of pricey collectables, but there were also DVDs (good ones!) for \$1 apiece, graphic novels for \$5, and boxes of comic book back issues (for those who want to dig) for \$1 each.
- Iconic vehicles from legendary films and TV shows continue to be a draw at this show. Spotted on this year's floor: the DeLorean from *Back to the Future* (which was probably visited by attending star Christopher Lloyd in a replay of his memorable photo-op at the 2014 CES show) and the safari Jeep from *Jurassic Park*.
- There were, as always, a number of programs going on throughout the show—from Q&A sessions with stars to discussions of story and art for aspiring comics creators.

The 2014 Philadelphia Wizard World may be wrapped, but there are still plenty of shows left for the remainder of 2014 around the country:

- Aug. 1–3: San Antonio, Texas
- Aug. 21–24: Chicago
- Sept. 12–14: Richmond, Va.
- Sept. 26–28: Nashville, Tenn.
- Oct. 2–4: Austin, Texas
- Oct. 31–Nov. 2: Ohio
- Nov. 7–9: Tulsa, Okla.
- Nov. 21–23: Reno, Nev.

Go to wizardworld.com for tickets, guest announcements and further info.



The Jeep from Jurassic Park

Can't we all just get along?

Finally, self-serve beer machines have arrived



In a cross-company mash-up, DC's Harley Quinn walked the floor with Marvel's Deadpool.



This guy—portraying (I think) Batman villain Man-Bat (on stilts, no less)—was impressive.



Sonic the Hedgehog always got the chicks.

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