

Geekdom Celebrated in ‘Comic-Con Episode IV: A Fan’s Hope’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 6, 2012 - 1:53pm

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Say the words “San Diego Comic-Con” to a certain comic geek subculture and suddenly heart rates are up and anticipation is in the air. The documentary maker Morgan Spurlock (“Supersize Me”) seeks to capture that feeling in “Comic-Con Episode IV: A Fan’s Hope,” with help from Seth Rogen, Kevin Smith, Stan Lee, Thomas Jane, Josh Whedon, Seth Green and Matt Groening.

Get out the comic fan geek meter, because the way that you react to the film will be based on how close you are to the red zone. If you love the annual event, the pop culture and the comics, then Morgan Spurlock has delivered a valentine, because the feeling of the fun and the mutual admiration society is apparent in every frame. If you’re not such a fan, the film will give you an understanding of the passion, even as you roll your eyes at the familiar “dudes talking about pop culture.”

The documentary focuses on five distinct but related-to-the-Con-stories, with all the joy, heartache and profit intact from a convention that started in 1970 with 150 participants, and now boasts 100,000 visitors. Two participants, Skip and Eric, are aspiring comic book artists. Their passion is relevant to everything the festival is about. Holly is a costume designer, and she is entering the big costume contest. Her unique energy pays off in ways she couldn’t have imagined. James wants to propose to his girlfriend, who he met at Comic-Con the year before, and Chuck is a long-time comic books dealer, who is morally conflicted between the profit he needs for his business and his love for the soul of the comic book universe.



Between these stories are a series of interview soundbites given by the famous, the comic book purveyors and the lovers of the medium. In many ways, they are trying to explain the unexplainable, but it is effective how the documentary weaves from the individual stories of cause-and-effect in San Diego with Kevin Smith talking about how comic books made a difference in his life, to the extent that he is glad he was born in this time in history.

Morgan Spurlock has become a very effective story teller, as he has evolved through over a dozen documentaries and two major television series. It is obvious he loves the rhythm of the convention as well, and is effective on getting the celebs to “geek out” on their favorites, releasing the child inside them all. The focus on the archetypes at San Diego – the artists, the seller, the designer and the proposal – lends a familiarity to outsiders. It's hard to imagine someone not being drawn in by the passion of the attendees and their stories, because any type of passion is universal.

The great thing about following-the-players type documentaries are the happy accidents, and there are a couple of good ones here. The proposal is spectacular is how it times out (but note to James, there are some red flags in the relationship. Just saying.) and the journey of the costume designer couldn't have been any better. There is something vital about a group of small-town fellow travelers toiling away on something authentic, simply for the love of it, and then gaining an unexpected reward.



Designer Holly Conrad in 'Comic-Con Episode IV: A Fan's Hope'
Photo credit: Wreckin Hill Entertainment

Another unexpected commentary that comes from this exploration is how the comic book itself has been shuffled to the background of “Comic-Con.” George Lucas’s company has bought the rights to the loading dock, for god of thunder’s sake. But it is the comic book that led the participants to this promised land, in the explosive popularity of the adaptation movies, new technology and videogames. The fantasy of the videogame makes everyone superheroes, in a sense, and that’s how a modest exhibition of kid’s pulp books in 1970 expands to prove that 40 years later the geeks have inherited the earth.

The soundbite interviews reveal glory to the comic fan. The best involved following or gaining autographs from the obscure artists and famous faces (Stan Lee), just because of the appreciation in their creative labor. And speaking of Stan Lee (the face of Marvel Comics), is there any better representative in the lionizing of comic book superheroes? He gets the passion, and personalizes every encounter in some way. Again, back to Kevin Smith, who can’t believe he’s done enough of the shows that Stan Lee greets him personally.

We live in uncertain times, defined by an ever-expanding loss of personal encounters due to the care and feeding of technology. The San Diego Comic-Con is a reminder that there are people behind those ones and zeroes, the type of folks that even though they perpetuated the tech revolution, they can still find the romance behind it.

“Comic-Con Episode IV: A Fan’s Hope” opens in theaters and Video- On-Demand on April 6th. Check local listings for show times, theaters and VOD channels. Featuring Seth Rogen, Kevin Smith, Stan Lee, Thomas Jane, Josh Whedon, Seth Green and Matt Groening. Written by Jeremy Chilnick, Josh Whedon and Morgan Spurlock. Directed by Morgan Spurlock. Rated “PG-13”



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