

I think Steven and I first started talking about the possibility of attending 2007's New York Comic Con around the time of 2006's New York Comic Con. And we talked about it periodically throughout the following several months, until we finally decided to make the trip a reality around November.

We planned early, and purchased weekend passes in advance (a good thing considering Saturday tickets sold out quickly), reserved our room at the hotel boasting to be the closest hotel to the Javits Center (convention location), bought our airplane tickets, and shopped for winter clothes – as we live in Florida.

With more bags than we could carry, we arrived on Thursday, took a \$60 dollar taxi (should have taken the shuttle for half the price) and checked into the New Yorker. We did some sight seeing in Manhattan and then stopped by Marvel comics. This was very cool and learned a lot of interesting things. It was worth every moment. (Thanks C.B.)

Our Comic Con introduction was Friday, Feb. 23. We waited in the hotel lobby for about five minutes, waiting for the shuttle that was advertised to offer free transportation to and from the convention. We got impatient and eventually decided to walk to the convention center. When we approached we saw the long line outside, which we assumed was not meant for us since we already had our tickets. So we walked directly inside the convention center and registered. We were then directed to check in our coats.

Checking in our coats was our first mistake.

You see, after we checked in our coats, we were advised that our next step in entering the convention would be to join the long line that had formed outside the convention center. Yes, that's right. I said "outside." So here we were, looking like idiots along with

thousands of other attendees. We all stood in freezing weather, and without our coats.

As we got close enough in the slow-moving line to see the inside of the center, we saw ample room in the back which could have easily been utilized as a place for the line to form – instead of outside in weather just begging us to become frost-bitten. OK. Maybe I am exaggerating. But seriously, it was freezing. Snow, freezing.

We finally made it inside. At first glance, we were impressed. We didn't know where to go first. We looked at the vendors downstairs. There were also some artists signing downstairs. We looked at all the give-aways. We looked at all the people. We decided we made the right decision. The convention was huge. Steven and I are avid comic book convention attendees. We have been in conventions throughout Florida, Baltimore and North Carolina – so far. But nothing, and I mean nothing, compared to New York for us at this point.

After spending about an hour and a half downstairs, we decided to venture upstairs – Artist Alley. We were then faced with a line. A line to step onto the escalator. As each person came down the escalator, they let a person up the escalator. Finally, it was our turn to ride the escalator into the mass world of chaos. (We later learned if Friday night was chaos, then the same location on Saturday could only be called total and complete disarray and disorder).

Anyway, back to Friday night. On Friday night we stood on very few lines, and eased our way through both levels of the convention effortless. We got many books signed and we were able to meet Gene Colan, Carmine Infantino, Tom Defalco, Danny Fingerroth, Peter David, Javier Luis Garcia Lopez, Rob Liefeld, Mark Morales, Steve Mcniven, Greg Rucka, Ron Garney, J.G. Jones,

Charlie Huston, Bob Layton and many others that were very cool and nice. We saw a lot and even picked up an Amazing Spider-man #538 Midtown Comics Variant. (Surprisingly not a lot of costumes compared to other conventions, but this could have been due to the cold weather.)

I think we were both disappointed when the time came to collect our coats Friday night to wait for the shuttle that never did come, and forced us to walk back to the hotel in weather colder than I think I have ever experienced.

We woke up Saturday, eager to embark on part two of our NY Comic Con experience. This time we caught the shuttle to the convention center. We were off to a good start. We waited in line again as the line was around the corner of the convention and down the street. This time we decided to keep our coats on but it took over an hour plus to get inside. After we entered the convention, I parted from Steven to try to check in our coats. I had to stand on a very long line to get a wristband so that I could leave and re-enter the convention center without standing on the outside line, before I could get to the area to check in our coats. I was gone much longer than expected, but had no problems finding Steven nonetheless. He was exactly where I had left him. On the same line. In the same spot. It was at that moment we both realized Saturday was not going to go nearly as smoothly as Friday night.

We learned that tickets to get anything signed by Stan Lee were long gone, as was the opportunity to meet Stephen King. (We would have to go back downstairs to the special events area and then wait outside once again to get inside if we would have tried to get the tickets, anyway.)

So we went upstairs, shocked to learn there was no line. We were told Saturday would be much busier than Friday. Whoa. No wonder there was no line. They must have just allowed everyone

up there. We couldn't move. We couldn't breathe. But we decided that we were brave as we ventured into the madness. This was, by far, the most poorly organized convention we have ever attended. The aisles were so narrow people could barely fit through them. And when a line formed for an artist or writer, all hell broke loose. It just wasn't happening. We stood on a few lines, got some more books signed, but nothing went as smoothly as Friday night. We stopped at a line formed for Brian Bolland. His assistant (publicist?) said that as soon as Mr. Bolland finished this sketch (which should only be a few minutes) he would sign books. We decided to get on line. One hour later, Mr. Bolland was still sketching. We left the line. We never went back to Mr. Bolland. There were several artists we never went back to for similar reasons that day. The lines were outrageous. But perhaps the lines wouldn't have been half as bad, if the event would have been designed differently. Narrow aisles for artists, writers and wide spaces for vendors. It made no sense. People were there to get books signed and to meet artists, writers and legends of the comic book world. Not simply to buy items from vendors. We were very disappointed at the event we looked forward to for months. With heavy footsteps we headed back downstairs. We never went back upstairs. We didn't even come back on Sunday.

Downstairs was a bit better. We visited some more booths downstairs, including the Marvel and DC areas. These were designed much better – open and room for lines to form. We were so glad these booths were placed strangely with the vendors instead of upstairs with the artists. It was even great to meet Denny Oneil, Klaus Janson, David Finch, Andy Lanning, The Archie guys, Joe Rubenstein, Jim Starlin, Bob Wiacek, Erik Larson, C.B. Cebulski, David Mazzucchelli and the Star Wars crew – John Ostrander, Jan Duursema and Sean Cooke

We then headed to the Kevin Smith panel. Surprisingly we entered without a problem. No wait, and plenty of empty seats. Kevin

Smith was his usual sick-humorous self. For me, he was the highlight of NY Comic Con. He answered every stupid question that came his way, and no, I'm not being mean or petty. The questions really were stupid. "Umm. Mr. Smith? What was the book on the table during the 6th episode of Season 2 of the show "Lost?" Seriously, somebody asked him that question. A high-school girl also announced her lesbianism to Kevin Smith (and the thousands in the crowd.) If you ask me, she was just looking for attention, but what do I know? A highlight question that we heard was, "If you had two people to choose – fiction or non-fiction who would it be?" Before he answered, the girl asking the question stated Keanu Reeves with a chain saw versus T-Rex. At this point the crowd went nuts. Kevin stated that he would choose the chef from the muppets versus (some guy). The girl asked him who would win and he said, "(some guy) because the f*#@#*&g chef is a puppet".

We then ate our pricey convention center meals before heading back to the first floor area of vendors, just to see if we missed anything. We wandered around, and spoke to mainly people we had already spoken to, and just looked around. We saw some really cool Star Wars and DC comic book hero costumes and then we left the convention disappointed. We were not disappointed with the artists, writers, and vendors in attendance. We were disappointed at the convention as a whole. And we were not alone. All day we overheard complaints. The other big complaint was the convention consisting of more anime than comic books.

Saturday night we were lucky enough to attend an industry party, consisting of mainly Marvel artists, writers and editors. This was called the Chesterfest hosting by C.B. Cebulski. Next to Kevin Smith, this was the best part of our NY Comic Con experience. We got to talk face-to-face one-on-one with artists and writers, while having cocktails. Some of them we had met before. Others we haven't. Thanks Mr. Larson, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Quesada, Mr

Vaughn, Mr Coipel (Yes especially C.B.) and anyone else we may have forgotten.

It was a great night. We both learned more about the comic book business, which gave us more information we were looking for to see if it was something we wanted to pursue joining. But mainly we just had a great time talking and getting to know some creative geniuses.

We decided to skip Sunday as we had become totally worn out and disappointed from Saturday.

So in conclusion, will we attend NY Comic Con again next year? The answer is maybe. Depends on if somebody absolutely fabulous is going to be there and only there. It also depends on if we hear news that it will be set up differently. But if we do attend, we both already agreed we will attend Friday and Sunday, but skip Saturday. And that's probably the best piece of advice we could give anyone contemplating attending NY Comic Con 2008.

Don't get me wrong. In all, we had a great time and have absolutely no regrets about attending. It was another experience to add to the list that is always growing.