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A TALE OF TWO CONS

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by **Nicholas Iandolo**

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9 a.m., wolfing down a breakfast burrito, rushing over the suspension walkway toward the San Diego Convention Center, I end up standing in line outside for 4 ½ excruciating hours futilely trying to catch the coveted panel for Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* at the 2012 San Diego Comic-Con (SDCC). Alas, it was not meant to be because 6,500 lucky and determined conventioners had actually lined up the night before to catch this event.

However, standing in line for the Buck Rogers panel at the 2012 Rhode Island Comic-Con (RICC) was decidedly more pleasant. First of all, there was no line. Secondly, the event was held in a small ballroom where I could actually see Gil Gerard and Felix Silla, both stars of "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century."

Don't get me wrong; I was enthralled by the massive scale of the SDCC, the gargantuan exhibits, and its amazing panels – but smaller also has its advantages.

The RICC offered something that the SDCC just couldn't: accessibility. When I spoke to Richard Hatch, star of "Battlestar Galactica," he offered this opinion of the RICC versus the SDCC. "The SDCC is big business, grown from a small con to a big multimedia corporate-driven networking event from TV, films, games, and toys, whereas the RICC is still a first-time show and it's already a success that people love. It's completely accessible."

A lot of people I spoke with had the same opinion. While standing in line for the Power Rangers panel, Seth from Worcester, Massachusetts, said, "I never minded standing in line to meet the people [stars]. The Power Rangers were childhood heroes of mine." Then he headed straight into the room.

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Sep 29 2017 @ Warwick Museum of Art

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At the SDCC, the panels I did get into had lines so huge they went outside the building, down flights of stairs, and sometimes out into the nearby marina. But if it's worth it to you, you'll make that commitment. Fortunately for Seth, he didn't have to go that far to see his childhood heroes.

2012 was the RICC's inaugural year, boasting a greater turnout than last spring's Boston Anime Festival – upward of around 13,000 visitors. The one thing I found really amazing was how many little ones were present. At the SDCC, with a turnout of more than 130,000 people, I hardly noticed any children under the age of 12. Given the enormous expense, the difficulty in obtaining even a one-day pass, and the craziness of it all, it is no surprise that the event is geared more toward adults.

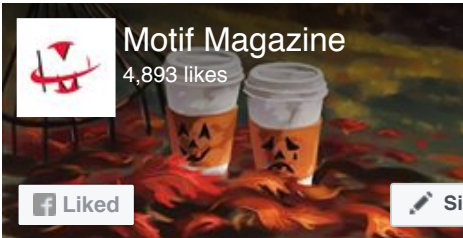
However, with the RICC, people were even bringing their infants!

Herbert Jefferson Jr., also a star of "Battlestar Galactica," offered this opinion about the RICC. "Very intimate, very small, but close enough for families to come. Also affordable – you don't have to mortgage your house to get here!"

Certainly, if you have the means and want to experience the biggest sci-fi/fantasy/comic book con of all time, the SDCC and Atlanta's Dragon Con are worth the pilgrimage. But if you want family-friendly accessible super-cool fun, come to the RICC next year. I guarantee you'll be hooked!


Claudia Wells, of *Back to the Future* fame, had these parting thoughts. "I like it. Great con! Great people! And great [Rhode Island] seafood!"

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