- - **HELLION FOR HIRE: TALKING NYCC WITH LARRY SETTEMBRINI**
(*http://forum.newsarama.com/showthread.php?t=102551*)

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HELLION FOR HIRE: TALKING NYCC WITH LARRY SETTEMBRINI

Don't be left out of the cold at the New York Comic Con, Tracers and more *24*

by Billy Tucci

Hello All! It's so great to be back. I want you all to know that this column may be shorter than usual, but it's part of my plan to be more efficient and productive, as I for now on will attempt to make **Hellion For Hire** a weekly. Deadlines, travel and typical family obligations have held me up a bit, but I've got some really exciting projects coming out this year and look to "HFH" to keep me organized and on the ball. Today we'll focus on this week's major con event, The New York Comic Con. A show that seems more and more like an East Coast version of San Diego's Comic Con International, *everyone* is either going to or really bummed out they're not! Also included this week are some thoughts on *24*, **Shi of Sparta** and the original charity depiction of Hayden Panettiere for the Heroes Initiative.

Behind the scenes at the New York Comic Con and how not to be left out in the cold

One of the most anticipated and dare I say, *controversial*, conventions in years is this week's New York Comic Con at Manhattan's Jacob Javits Center. We all know what happened at last year's show where, amid the massive crowds and confusion the FDNY Fire Marshals where called in and literally shut the place down. The FDNY were ruthless in their pursuit of public safety as ticket holders, professionals and even DC Comics' Senior Vice President and Executive Editor Dan Didio was denied access. I myself was at the Orlando Mega Con (awesome con itself!) and missed all the ballyhoo, but one person in particular was there right smack in the middle of it all, show manager Lawrence Settembrini. "Larry," is an affable sales executive with the LaunchPad group at Reed Expositions. Like last year, Larry's one of the show's organizers who's been spending his days (and it seems nights) dealing directly with attending professionals and exhibitors to ensure that every aspect of the NYCC is pulled off successfully and safely.

So without any ado (or a don't) let's get to the nuts and bolts of what really goes on behind the scenes at the New York Comic Con and how not to be left out in the cold! (and that's Larry on the right)

HFH: Tell us Larry, how long have you been working for Reed Expositions and how did you land the gig?

Larry Settembrini: A little over two years ago a good friend of mine that was working on the team and knew I was looking for a new challenge. He recommended me for the position and here I am.

HFH: Tell us about Reed Expositions…

LS: Reed is the leading show organizer in the world. The company organizes over 400 shows. It is an amazing company to work for. The team I work with is very dedicated to this event and we have a lot of fun.

HFH: What's cool is that NYCC 2007 is only your second comic book convention but you've managed to put on one of the most anticipated shows in a decade with a major guest and exhibitor list. What's your secret and why New York City?

LS: We have a fantastic relationship with the publishing world through our Book Expo America event. The Comic and Graphic novel categories within that event have been growing rapidly over the past few years. We thought it was a natural progression to organize an event that focused on the comic & pop culture industry. New York is the publishing capital of the nation, and has one of the largest populations. New York was overdue for a big event (as we found out last year).

HFH: Last year the show was much more successful and anyone expected. Unfortunately it was also incredibly overcrowded. The fire marshals wouldn't allow

many ticket holders, exhibitors and guests in at some point last year. What happened?

LS: Billy, when we were pulling the show together last year, we expected 10-15,000 attendees. We were sitting in the office a week before the show wondering if we could get those sorts of a crowd. Obviously, the number of people that came down caught us off guard. Most people that were at the show will acknowledge a difference in the way crowds were handled on Sunday, after we realized that Frankenstein had really come alive.

HFH: What measures are you taking this year to avoid a repeat?

LS: I don't know where to begin, we have spent countless hours planning this out. First off we have capped the number of attendees that we can accommodate. Secondly, we have strongly encouraged pre-show registration. Those that registered before the end of January had their actual badges mailed to them (nothing to pick up on site). These folks will have a separate line and priority over everyone. Anyone that ordered their badge after February 1 will have it waiting for them in at the Registration Desk on-site. We have separate lines for everything. We have over 50 staff members managing lines and directing attendees when they get to the show.

You may also know by now that weekend and Saturday passes are sold out. We still have Friday and Sunday tickets available. It's tough to say this but, we are discouraging anyone without a ticket to show up on Saturday. We are managing the numbers *very* closely to make sure that everyone who bought a pass in advance gets into the show.

Newsarama Note: This interview was conducted prior to the NYCC announcing that no, or a very limited number of tickets would be sold on site on Saturday.

HFH: How many attendees are you expecting this year?

LS: I'll be able to answer that on February 26th…

HF: Are you a comic book fan?

LS: I've honestly been out of touch for a long time, but I am quickly getting back into it. The thing that is getting me back into it, is the industry at large. I've never worked with such a great group of exhibitors and attendees. Everyone wants to see the industry grow.

HFH: Who's your favorite character and creators?

LS: I can't say that I have one in particular right now, but I'm definitely more old school. I'm into the old characters. Right now I'm reading **Civil War** and **Batman: Hush**. I'm also an Alex Ross fan.

HFH: A last minute addition to the NYCC is rising starlet Hayden Panettiere from NBC's *Heroes*. How did you accomplish the task on such short notice?

LS: As you mentioned earlier our show is getting national recognition. We have major news outlets covering the event and NYCC is a great marketing channel. Often times getting big stars into the show is about timing. Hayden happens to be taking a

break from shooting for the weekend and wanted to come out to meet New York fans. What's your process for acquiring other "celebrities? Do they get a fee?
It varies; sometimes we reach out, and other times the studios bring them in to help promote new films or TV shows.

HFH: How do you go about getting such a diverse group comic book "guests?"

LS: It's not easy. We have had help from some of the big publishers and industry pros.

HFH: What are you most looking forward to for this show?

LS: Come on Billy – I want to meet Hayden! But seriously, after pouring a year of your life into this event there in no better satisfaction than seeing smiles when the fans get to meet their idols. It's too bad that we only have 3 days to enjoy it.

HFH: I know many professionals had trouble getting tables.

LS: This has been the hardest part for me personally. We were really hoping to have more space for Artist Alley. We have literally received hundreds of Artist Alley applications and just can't accommodate everyone. Every time I get an email from a Pro I check out their website. There is some major talent out there. I wish we had unlimited tables, but our hands have been tied for months, we just physically don't have the space.

HFH: What steps can they take next year to avoid the same problems?

LS: I recommend that pro's get their applications in early (at this years show if possible). We are expanding the show again in 2008, so I'm optimistic that we can grow our Artist Alley. I will say that we can't guarantee a table when your application is submitted, but the earlier it is in, the better your chances.

HFH: What's the most rewarding part of putting on a convention of this magnitude?

LS: As I mentioned earlier, there is this immense satisfaction in seeing people get blown away with the size and scope of the show. Last year we had a 10 year old and his father miss a signing by a few minutes. The kid was upset. I was able to find the creator and get an autograph for the kid. I think we made his day. That felt good.
At the end of the day we want to see the business grow. This show is not only a cool place to meet your favorite creators, but some major business occurred at the show last year. We are pushing the business side with the trade only hours on Friday morning. Last year we had over 6,000 buyers, licensing pros, school teachers, librarians and industry executives attend.

HFH: What's most frustrating?

LS: Saying no. Getting emails or calls from exhibitors and amazing artists and telling them that we are out of space.

HFH: The demand for attending your show has been so tremendous; several pros missed out on getting tables. Any advice for those people wanting a table next year?

LS: The best advice I can offer is to get your application in early.

HFH: After all is said and done and the con finally wrapped up on Sunday, do you end up getting all liquored up?

LS: All I can say is that we were wiped out after the show last year. I had to drink out of a straw because I had no energy to lift the bottle. But I did drink…

HFH: Thank you Larry!

LS: No problem Billy, I'll see you at the show!

Mr. Settembrini, 29, is an avid outdoorsman who lives in Trumbill, Connecticut with his wife and is expecting their first child in April. When not competing in endurance events like Adventure Racing and 24-hour bike mountain bike racing, he can often be found mulling around Home Depot in the molding or power tool isles.

I myself will have a table in Artists' Alley alongside such other artists as Chewbacca, Jim Shooter and Michael Douglas. I'll also be signing at the Marvel Comics booth with Mark Sparacio this Sunday from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm. We'll be giving away free sketches for everyone so come on down!

For more info and minute by minute show updates visit the front page here at Newsarama, or the NYCC website: http://www.newyorkcomiccon.com

Photorealistic rendering, one great charity and art in comics

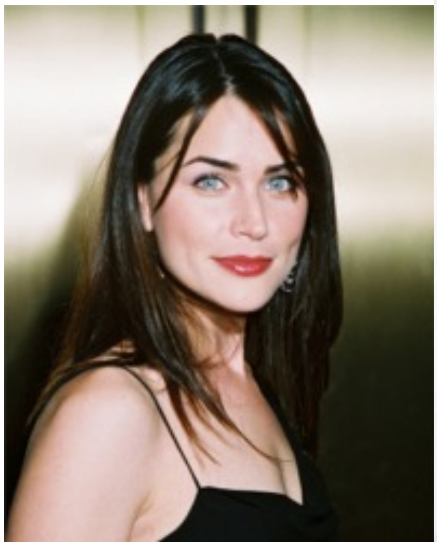
Getting back to Hayden Panettiere and my good pal Mark Sparacio, here's a little ditty you'll not see anywhere: The man recently spent 65 hours of his life rendering the "Cheerleader" for a litho benefiting the Heroes Initiative charity at this year's NYCC. Mark has been a professional illustrator for over 20 years who likes to shoot his own reference, but as per Miss Panettiere's agent's instructions, faithfully recreated the star's image with the images they provided him. I think it's an amazing piece of artwork that benefits a wonderful charity (http://www.heroinitiative.org/) and would appreciate you picking up a copy if you're attending the show.

Miss Panettiere was gracious enough to allow her image to be used, but the poor man had to go back in and recreate one specific image for the litho. It seems the big shots at NBC weren't too keen on him using an actual image from the show. So amid much initial confusion and for your enjoyment, here's original depiction crushed by NBC. A future column of "Hellion" will delve on the history of photo reference, live models and how it pertains to comic books and illustration in general.

[See also - http://forum.newsarama.com/showthread.php?t=102106]

Missing Kim Bauer, but these chippies ain't shabby either!

Now here's two people I'd like to render – literally… Marisol Nichols and Rena Sofer of Fox's *24*. Marisol plays CTU agent Nadia Yassir, while Rena jazzes up the Bauer family tree as his brother Graham's widow Marilyn. So is Nadia as mole for the terrorists? Does Marilyn's son Josh actually come from Jack's loins? Who cares, these women are hot and in the absence of Kim, they'll do me just fine! On a side note, the beautiful Rena went to high school with Wizard's own Gareb Shamus and I believe she'd make a great Hera in the upcoming Wonder Woman movie. What do you think?



Final thoughts on cons and comics! Next week I'll be heading out to Athens Greece for Comicdon (March 3-4) where I have the honor of illustrating this year's program guide cover, titled "Shi of Sparta." I'll post final colors next week, but it's obviously heavily influenced by Frank Miller's **300** and the actual events of 480 BC. After the show, I'll be going to Thermopylae with my wife Deborah and will devote the following week's column to Mr. Miller's brilliant comic and the and upcoming film based on the sacrifice of Leonidas' 300 Spartans. For more on the show please log onto: http://www.comicdom.gr/convention200...e=main&lang=en

Back to work and I promise next week's column will see the return of "Wanker of the Week!"

bkbrawler

02-23-2007 09:07 AM

can't wait for saturday, i hope i get to meet some cool people

Ace

02-23-2007 09:10 AM

Take it from experience: If you get the chance to stop by and talk to Billy at the con, take it.

He's one of the friendliest creators I've come across, and he loves feedback about the column too.

boomboom

02-23-2007 09:12 AM

Billy

After seeing these images I am almost eager enough to watch 24 :D

Your Spartan Shi looks amazing...you should let different people color it. Just for fun...

and then a nice contest to see "whose best" ...might be fun!

The Guvnor

02-23-2007 11:48 AM

Nice column as usual, thanks.

Yeah those two chicks in 24 are definitely very attractive. Chloe is looking great this series as well.

ANGELDOGGIE

02-23-2007 12:20 PM

Hey Billy, Glad to hear that your HFH column is going weekly. It's always a fun read, and I look foward to it! I am also eagerly looking foward to your writing on the topic of photo realism. That should clear some things up, and instruct those who do not understand. Thanx for another good column!:D

kikuchiyo

02-23-2007 01:40 PM

Great article Billy. Thankfully i haven't had that experience here in San Diego. That Marisol Nichols girl is gorgeous.

mattguthrie

02-23-2007 01:43 PM

its about time they are having a big con in NYC...i mean this is the back yard of the big two...im sure they want this to be a successful con. that way they dont have to travel all the way across the country to make big announcements. that and they get a bunch of their creators in town, which im sure is always good when you can sneak them in for a meeting or two while they are there.

to bad i cant go...wa wa waaaaaaaaaa

EMeadow

02-23-2007 03:45 PM

Billy, Rena Sofer is also on Heroes playing the Senator Petrelli's disabled wife.

But I'm still a fan of hers from the short, lamented American version of Coupling.

BlackCatGuy

02-23-2007 08:34 PM

Hey Billy, glad to see your column return! Have a great time at the show! Wish Dom and I could be there, but neither of us could get the time off work (gotta save for Philly!) Look forward to your column next week! I hope you'll give us poor slobs that couldn't make it to the show a run-down of how it all went! :D :cool:

All times are GMT -4. The time now is 04:35 PM.

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