Encounter at Comic Con

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ENCOUNTER AT COMIC CON

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Carly Jerome
June 2013
Advisor: Rodney Buxton
ABSTRACT

Comic books and comic book culture have always been a man's world - until recently. With the growing popularity of graphic novels, movies based off of comic books, and publishers creating more feminist-friendly work, the gender lines are blurring. The short documentary *Encounter at Comic Con* examines gender stereotypes, and attempts to challenge them. Traveling to Denver's first ever Comic Convention, filmmaker Carly Jerome interviews attendees, professional costume players, and then turns the camera on herself. Her findings are fascinating, but it is her personal journey during the three-day event that is most compelling.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER ONE: THESIS PROPOSAL
- Introduction .................................................. 1
- Comic Books in Film ....................................... 3
- Comic Book Fans ........................................... 14
- Women Entering the Club ................................ 17
- Methodology ................................................. 21
- Projected Budget ........................................... 30
- Audience ..................................................... 31

## CHAPTER TWO: PRE-PRODUCTION ANALYSIS
- Expect the Unexpected .................................... 33
- Staffing and Equipment ................................... 38

## CHAPTER THREE: PRODUCTION REVIEW
- And So It Begins… .......................................... 41
- Have Fun Storming the Castle ......................... 42
- So Say We All .............................................. 46

## CHAPTER FOUR: POST-PRODUCTION DISCUSSION
- With Great Power There Must Also Come Great Responsibility ............................................. 48
- This Episode was Badly Written .................... 50
- Try Not; Do, or Do Not – There is No Try ........ 52

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS
- Dammit Jim! I’m a Filmmaker, Not a Doctor! .............. 58
- Make it So .................................................. 60

## BIBLIOGRAPHY
- .................................................. 64

## APPENDICES
- Appendix A – Budget .................................... 70
- Appendix B – Personal Releases from Interviewees ... 71
- Appendix C – Crowd Notice ............................ 109
Introduction

Bang! Pow! Wham! These onomatopoeic words are splashed against brightly drawn pages so to engage the reader further by invigorating the action occurring within the panels. For myself, whenever I repeat these words or read them, I immediately make the intended sound in my head, followed by the imagined action of whatever the sound represents. Whether it’s a whooshing from a fist being thrown into the air, or a kablam of an explosion occurring, the comic book font and bright contrasting colors are displayed in my imagination. As a young child, I eagerly awaited for the Sunday paper to be distributed. Luckily, as an only child, I had no one to fight for the funnies, gobbling up the newest adventure of Peanuts (Schulz 1950) in each weeks set of panels. From there, I was hooked. I begged my parents to purchase the Archie Comics (1941) that were on the shelf of the supermarket. I chewed as much Bazooka gum as I could, not because I enjoyed the taste of flavorless cement-textured gum, but because I loved reading the comics that were hidden on the inside wrapper. By third grade, my collection of Pokémon (1996) cards was respectable, though I never played the game. Around the same time, I dived into the world of anime and became a fervent fan of Sailor Moon (1995).
Soon, however, I learned that being a comic book or manga fan was not what the cool kids did. I stopped wondering if Archie would pick Veronica or Betty to marry, and instead focused on the boy bands that were sweeping the nation. Of course, I watched all the summer blockbusters that were released each year that were based on comic books – from Tim Burton’s *Batman* (1989), to *X-Men* (2000), *Spider-Man* (2002), and *Men in Black* (1997), there was no shortage of comic book related media in my life, except for the books themselves. In college I began reading the graphic novel – a more adult-type of comic book. From there, I renewed my interest in comic books and all things related.

However, current social mores continue to make female fandom (of comics) unacceptable. I kept my interest under wraps, until I realized how ridiculous it is that I should feel ashamed for reading *The Amazing Spider-Man* (1963). Out of this realization came the idea for my thesis project. In my documentary film, I want to illustrate how female fans are portrayed and treated within comic book culture. I want to explore the female fan’s experience with the genre, and try to answer the questions why comic fandom is gendered and why there is a negative stigma attached to being a female fan.

Until most recently, it hasn’t been ‘cool’ to like comic books. With the rise and popularity of comic culture in popular culture, including the extreme popularity of the award winning television series *The Big Bang Theory* (2007 - ), being a fan doesn’t automatically mean that you are an outcast. However, this is still only true for male fans. Female fans continue to be portrayed as ‘losers’ who need to need to get a life, or are not represented at all. In documentaries on comic books, female fans are underrepresented. Even in literature and academic research, the female fan is nowhere to be found. When
she is written about, the article or essay is one of few, like Bruce Banner in the Marvel Universe.

As is evident by *The Avengers* release, which broke the world record for any film’s opening weekend with $200.3 million dollars in sales (McClintock 2012), movies based on comic books are a lucrative business. Even television shows are attempting to cash in on this lucrative subject. From *The Walking Dead* (AMC 2010 - ) to *Comic Book Guys* (AMC 2012 - ), comics seem to be the ‘it’ thing. Even the remake of *21 Jump Street* (2012) has its main characters comment on how liking comic books (but not necessarily reading them) is what the ‘cool’ kids do. This is a big change from thirty years ago when William Shatner walked out onto Studio 8H to encourage his fans to “get a life” (*Saturday Night Live* 1986). Something that has not changed over the years, however, is that males continue to be portrayed as the only fans – women are either ignored or stigmatized for being a fan.

**Comic Books in Film**

Documentary movies about comic books fail to find large fan followings. This year, Morgan Spurlock released a documentary titled *Comic Con: Episode IV – A Fan’s Hope* (2012) that focuses on the attendants of the San Diego Comic Convention. As of May 15th, the film has only made $34,000 in box office sales; a small percentage of the total budget (Rotten Tomatoes 2012). Spurlock chooses half a dozen different people to follow, but only one is female. Two of the featured attendees, Eric Henson and Skip Harvey, are self-proclaimed illustrators and attempt to find work at the Convention. Chuck Rozanski is the owner of Mile High Comics in Denver, and attends the show to try
to boost his business. Holly Conrad, the only woman showcased in the film, is a costume designer, and creates a series of costumes (with a team of other men and women) based on the Mass Effects video game. Her goal is not to see or experience the Convention, but to be noticed at the Con’s masquerade, and hopefully to get a job. The film also follows James Darling and Se Young Kang, a couple that met at the previous year’s Convention. Darling has a plan to propose to Se Young during Kevin Smith’s presentation. Finally, the film follows a man who is a collector of action figurines. The film also shows glimpses into the responses and reactions (to the Convention) by ordinary attendees, though these are few and far between. Spurlock also has a gaggle of celebrities that he interviews about comics, comic book culture, and the Convention, and these interviews are interspersed with the different stories and the people he follows.

Unlike Spurlock’s previous projects, *A Fan’s Hope* does not take a critical stance on anything. The film slowly meanders its way through Comic Con, focusing alternately on celebrity attendees and job seekers, thus not ever really showing a fan’s experience. Three of the five people that Spurlock follows attend the Con as a way to find a job – it’s one big career fair for these people. While their plight is interesting and sympathetic, it’s not a fan’s perspective. The owner of Mile High Comics is, of course, a comic book fan, but his experience at the Convention is one of business. He is trying to sell comics (including one that’s worth over $500,000) in order to keep his business afloat. The final person is James Darling, who is trying to propose to his girlfriend. These two are huge fans of Comic Con, but they only attend the larger Convention hall events, which are mostly film and television based. In addition, Kang’s actions are obnoxious and tedious, as she does not allow him to do anything alone (including using the restroom). She is the
sidekick to her boyfriend, and the story is primarily his. Darling and Kang’s experience is shown as the lead-up to the proposal, and then the proposal itself. We barely get a glimpse into their experience as fans.

Finally, the film follows a man who is a collector. His story, though extremely short, is perhaps the best example of a fan’s experience at the Con. The man makes a mad dash to get into a line to purchase a specific item. As he waits in line, you can feel his anxiety and fear of not being able to obtain the only thing he came to Comic Con for. Sweat beads form against his temples, and his inability to stand still are visible markers of his nerves. Finally, he is at the front of the line, and he buys his toy! He is so excited about his purchase – it is clear that he is at the Convention not for a job, to make money, or to see the celebrities. Instead, he is there for the love of comics. His action figures are extensions of comics – small Iron Mans and Hulks, a Spiderman that shoots webs out of his hand. Like the comic book, figurines are sought after, and oft kept in their packaging to prolong their value. Why Spurlock chose not to follow him more, or tell similar stories is curious. This is the story that really illustrates a fan’s hope, not just hope for a job, money, or a ‘yes.’ Stories like his are ones that I wish to follow for my documentary.

It is also curious that Spurlock decided not to take a critical approach to Comic Con. Even discussing the economic market that is Comic Con – the mass marketing of films, television shows, celebrities, anything that is not comic book related – would have been easy enough to do. He does have a small section within his piece where the celebrity interviewees discuss how their perceptions regarding Comic Con have changed, noting that they see it as no longer about comics, but instead more broadly focused on popular
culture. If Spurlock could have taken that extra step, the documentary would have been more interesting rather than bland.

The film also clearly lacks any female fans. Of the countless celebrity interviews, only two are women. Actress Olivia Wilde, whose only relationship to the Convention is that she starred in the ill-fated *Cowboys and Aliens* (2011), states one sentence about Con, and then we never see her again. *X-Play* (1998 - ) host Morgan Webb has about twice as many segments as Wilde, and she discusses women’s clothing at the Convention as strange and revealing. Their takes on the Convention are minute, especially compared to how much screen time their male counterparts receive. Documentary subject Holly Conrad is clearly not attending the Convention as a fan, but as a costume designer trying to find a job in Hollywood. She is there to express her artistic abilities, and to share her work with others. Se Young, James Darling’s other half, is portrayed as needy, obsessive, clingy, and completely dependent on her partner. It’s a wonder that she was ever able to attend Comic Con without him. All of the men, celebrity interviewees or otherwise, discuss their experiences with comics – the first time they cracked open the spine of a comic, and their disappointment with the changing face of the Convention. The female interviewees only talk about celebrity culture, or the costumes that women wear. This portrayal reinforces the stereotype of women as the sidekick to their male counterparts, and conveys to the audience that women don’t read comics or can’t experience comic Con the same way as a male fan. While the experience of a female fan could very well be different than that of a male devotee, Spurlock unfairly portrays them as not true or legitimate fans. As an admirer of comic books myself, I know that I will not be attending
Comic Con because of the celebrities that attend, nor will I be dressing up in costume. My film will explore and address the complexity of the female fan.

The style of the film makes the movie interesting at first, but then slowly begins to ramble along without a cause. First, the film shows shots of Comic Con, of fans filtering into the convention hall. The voice over is of (male) celebrity fans and their first memories of the convention or of comics as a whole. We, the audience, begin to meet the several people Spurlock chose to showcase. However, so little time is spent with each person, that his or her desired outcome from the Con leaves me ambivalent. I found myself becoming more interested in the celebrity interviews, as they shared their experiences at the Convention as comic book enthusiasts. My own film, though not including celebrities, will focus on the fan. Though valid reasons for attending the Con, I am not interested in showcasing people who attend for potential career reasons.

The film’s creators lack a distinct voice in the documentary, which is most likely why the film is flat. Documentaries convey “a sense of what the filmmaker’s social point of view is and how this point of view becomes manifest in the act of making the film” (Nichols 2001). The film lacks a strong, defined social point of view. The editing techniques are safe choices: interspersed in between the sections when we are drifting through Comic Con are interviews with the various celebrities. Additionally, Spurlock uses comic book graphics to signal the start or beginning of a segment. This was both visually engaging and comedic at times. The editing style (interviews that separate the various segments at Comic Con and help explain what is occurring at the Con) is something that I plan on doing in my own film. Hopefully, interviews with myself and other participants of the Convention will supplement the scenes from the Denver Comic
Con itself. As with Spurlock’s earlier films such as Supersize Me (2004), I plan on turning the camera onto myself. I will have a camera operator following me and my own experience at the Convention, and I will also sit down with the camera and engage in a video diary type style. While I like the idea of following fans, and interviewing fans about their experience with Comic Con, Spurlock falls short in this regard as his movie about fans for fans isn’t really about the fan (or fandom) at all. My project will focus on what Spurlock leaves out – fandom and the fan’s experience. The current goal of my project is to show how the female fan engages in the comic culture.

Kevin Smith, who was one of the main interviewees in Episode IV: A Fan’s Hope, has his own television show on AMC. Called Comic Book Men (2012 - ), the series follows the four employees of Jay and Silent Bob’s Secret Stash (Smith’s comic book shop). This program is also significant to my project as it provides representations of comic book fans. The show is marketed as unscripted, and is a six-part series. The series is shot in a day-in-the-life sort of style, with the comic book employees purchasing and selling goods. Interspersed with the daily goings-on is commentary by the four and Kevin Smith himself, taped as part of the Secret Stash’s podcast. The show (and the store) purports to be “a refuge for many to hang out and be part of a community that loves comics” (Comic Book Men 2012). This cast of characters is interesting to watch; their chemistry is enjoyable and magnetic. They tease and banter with each other, and their wide-eyed amazement and splendor at some of the items that are brought in is exciting.

Fans from all over the world, but mostly from the Tri-State area (where the Secret Stash is located) bring their goodies – figurines, posters, comics and more – to the store to sell, and perhaps to get their fifteen minutes of fame. All of the employees live on their own
(not in their parent’s basement), and have a ‘life’ as is set by society’s standards (most are married or in a relationship). They seem like ‘cool’ guys that you would want to hang out with after work, not weirdo fanatics.

Even though the show is a fine example of comic geek identity, there is one group that is clearly and painfully missing – women. The title of the television show does suggest that only men will be showcased on the series, but surely there are women fans that enter the Secret Stash! According to a casting call that was released last June, the creators of the television show were looking for a woman to ‘work’ in the store for the days of the shoot, someone to play off the current employees (Venutolo 2011). Obviously, one was not hired. Several women do show up to sell items to the Secret Stash, but often they are portrayed as eccentric (and not in a positive way). For example, in the second episode a woman with a live-sized Chucky (Childs Play 1988) doll wants to sell it to make a few dollars. However, she becomes reluctant to sell her ‘baby.’ She refers to Chucky, an inanimate object, as her child. After being asked if she still has the box, she responds that she doesn’t keep family members in boxes. The woman decides that she can’t part with him, claiming that she probably feels sad now after this episode. As she leaves the store, she cradles the doll, waving its hand to the employees and bidding them farewell in a falsetto voice, mimicking the doll. Her behavior is different from what we would expect from a ‘normal’ person; she acts like a fanatic, someone who cannot tell the difference between reality and fiction. In the fifth episode, another woman shows up to the Secret Stash to sell a Catwoman (Finger and Kane 1940) doll her daughter received as a gift. The doll looks like a dominatrix – it’s based on the poorly received Halle Berry film. One of the Secret Stash employees offers the woman $10, and
she replies, “I’ll take $10 just to get out of here” (Comic Book Men 2012). This mother clearly does not like the comic book store, and wishes she was not there. While many women do not wish to be at a comic book store, and have no interest in its wares, I do not understand why the Secret Stash would choose to show women who are interested.

Likewise, my film will not focus on those who are uninterested in the subject, or who wish to escape the Convention because their friends or significant other dragged them there.

For whatever reason, the women who enter the comic book store are not true fans, but just people looking to make a buck or to get rid of something they do not cherish. Even though the Comic Book Men are welcoming to female customers, they just aren’t portrayed as being comic book fans. Additionally, in episode six a fan comes in to try to sell some Barbie (Handler 1959) superheroes. One of the employees remarks that they don’t belong in a comic book store, while another disagrees and purchases them. Of course, the Secret Stash carries action figures so why not Barbies? Perhaps because the items are intended for women, who either don’t belong in the comic store space, or because of the lack of female customers – the reasoning is unclear.

This show maintains that it is an unscripted series that “dives deep into fanboy culture by following the antics in around master fanboy Kevin Smith’s…comic shop” (AMC 2012). While I am sure that some of the scenes are unscripted, it seems that others are not. The conversations between employees change from casual to uncomfortable at times when it is clear that a future scene is being set up. Additionally, the people who come into the store were chosen by a casting director whose job it was to decide which people would make the best characters. The men are all fanboys – a term that describes
males at any age who revert to an almost adolescent stage, where they are giddy over
discussing their favorite comic book characters. The integrity and the ethics of the docu-
style television show is brought into question: seemingly unscripted, and yet having
clearly coached conversations is problematic and left me distrusting of what the show
purports to do – show fanboy and comic book culture. My film will have a strong voice
and clear stance on comic book culture. Women are underrepresented, and that will be
made clear. I want my film to be as truthful as possible, and unlike Comic Book Men, I
wish for my audience to be trusting of what they watch. While recognizing that through
editing and post-production I can manipulate my film’s voice, I hope to maintain the
integrity of my interviews, the intentions of my interviewees, and reliability of
observational footage.

However, unlike A Fan’s Hope, the television show does have a specific voice:
comic books are cool, and not everyone who is fan is a loser. The show seems to be
filmed with multiple cameras, and, like A Fan’s Hope, is interspersed with commentary
from the podcast, helping to narrate what is occurring in the show itself. The show finds a
lot of humor with the added commentary, making the show more interesting and fun to
watch. Since my own film will be a hybrid of participatory and observational styles, I see
Comic Book Men being more influential in style and tone than the previous Spurlock
film. Like the series, I hope to show that comic fandom is something that should be
celebrated, not hidden. While I would hope to have some comedic or humorous moments
captured on tape, I recognize that my film will have a more serious tone to it.

Although an older film, Trekkies (1999) is a documentary that follows various
Star Trek (1966-2005) fans. The film interviews fans in their homes, with their families,
and in their everyday life. The film also travels to various locations to film *Star Trek* followers (including conventions and a Trekker themed dentist office). Finally, the filmmaker interviews the stars from the various series, getting their take on the show and on the fans. The film attempts to show the fans as normal people, though often fails. For example, when one aficionado begins to say that the majority of the fans are not *fanatics* but are normal people using *Star Trek* as a form of escapism, the film cuts to images of costumed Klingons running down the street. The juxtaposition between someone stating that fans are *not* fanatical, with the images of people that a layperson might think *are* fanatical are interesting and juxtaposing ideas. The film’s ‘cast’ are a wide range of people – from teenage boys designing their own *Trek* costumes, an affluent couple that dress their cat up as a member of the Enterprise, a family that owns a small business, to a group of older women who one would probably never guess were Trekkies – this film covers the spectrum. People of differing ethnicities, social and financial backgrounds, ages, sexual orientation, and gender are all interviewed.

At several different times during the film, people are interviewed about the groundbreaking social stances that the television show takes. For example, Nichelle Nichols tells a story about how she played an African American woman in a position of power, and was not playing a maid or a submissive woman. In *Star Trek Voyager*, the question of gender and power is being challenged, with the captain of the ship being a woman. Kate Mulgrew, the captain of *Star Trek Voyager*, states that audiences “feel that it is the first time that they can sit down as a family and view a woman in a leadership role as a family without having to carry on a conversation about who’s being victimized or what does she stand for” (*Trekkies* 1999). Jeri Taylor, co-creator of *Star Trek Voyager*,
states that she receives mail from “women who say they watch Voyager with their daughters and how good it makes them feel to be able to point to the screen and say ‘See? You can be anything’” (*Trekkies* 1999). These stories standardize the idea that you can be a woman, be powerful, and not have to apologize for it. It also attempts to celebrate the idea that a woman can be a fan of something traditionally thought of as ‘male’ such as *Star Trek*. This is the sort of feel and tone (from a female, if not feminist perspective) that I think is important, especially with comic books and science fiction fans.

The documentary follows a semi-participatory style. While the filmmakers themselves are never on camera, actress Denise Crosby becomes an ambassador, bridging the gap between filmmaker and the participants of the film. She is often seen interacting and interviewing the fans and actors of *Star Trek*. The documentary lacks a voiceover commentary, and instead links the differing sections and parts of the documentary with fade to blacks, and cuts to different people who are being interviewed. The transitions, while not exactly seamless, work well in this film. The filmmaker makes connections between the various subjects – both people and topics – and the viewer moves along with the varying ideas without problem. The film is comprised of mostly interviews with fans, and it is clear that the fans are behaving differently with the camera around, offering their own commentary and opinions on any given event occurring within the scope of the camera. While effective for this film, this style is not going to be successful for all documentaries where an observational mode might make a stronger and more convincing argument (whatever that may be).

I foresee *Trekkies* as having the most influence on my film from the three films reviewed here. It is from this film that I feel that I really understand the fan’s perspective
on *Star Trek* and his or her relationship with the media. My own film will attempt to give a voice to the fans, though I will be focusing more so on the female fan. Likewise, *Star Trek* and comic books diverge when it comes to gender equality, as Trekkies have strong female role models in the series, while mainstream comic books focus on the scantily clad women who (save for Wonder Woman) are either the romantic interests of the superhero or are relegated to be his sidekick. Stylistically, I enjoyed the flow of *Trekkies*, and will keep this in mind when I edit my own project. I want to be able to preserve the audience’s attention while engaging them to think critically about the role of the female fan in comic culture. *Trekkies* does this by cutting between lighthearted segments and more serious issues.

**Comic Book Fans**

Many scholars have written about comic book fans, and fandom in general. Henry Jenkins, author of *Textual Poachers* (1992), attempts to normalize the fan’s experience. He rightfully argues that many fans are stereotyped into several categories, which he describes as people who are:

- brainless consumers who will buy anything associated with the program or its cast;
- devote their lives to the cultivation of worthless knowledge;
- place inappropriate importance on devalued cultural material;
- are social misfits who have become so obsessed with the show that it forecloses other types of social experience;
- are feminized and/or desexualized through their intimate engagement with mass culture;
- are infantile, emotionally and intellectually immature; and
- are unable to separate fantasy from reality. (Jenkins 10)

Fans are usually placed into one or more of these categories, even though these ideas are mostly fiction, and only extreme cases of fandom tend to make headlines (Leerhsen 1986). Fan culture is seen as a negative thing to be part of, with many authors arguing
that followers need to ‘get a life’ (Mullens 2005, Hills 2005, Leerhsen 1986, Saturday Night Live 1986, Paul 2011). Jenkins sees fans as more complex, multi-dimensional followers who are able to take cultural texts and re-appropriate them for their own alternative community. Fans have always been portrayed “as radically ‘Other’ rather than attempting to understand the complex relationship between fan culture and mainstream consumer culture” (Jenkins 287). The portrayal of fans as people who connect with a specific text, rather than obsessive losers is a subject that most comic book related cultural references fail to recognize. I hope to be able to portray fans as more than just fanatics in my film. As such, I will be considering Jenkins’s opinion on the multi-dimensional fan while conducting interviews and forming questions for said interviews. I think it is extremely important in my film to represent the fans, myself included, as having a complex relationship to the text and the community itself.

Matthew Putsz also looks at comic book fans and culture in his book *Comic Book Culture: Fanboys and True Believers*. Unlike other books and articles about comics, Pustz also focuses on the role of the comic book store and comic conventions. Pustz argues that these spaces “serve as a kind of cultural clubhouse where most fans can spend time being themselves among their friends and other likeminded individuals” (Pustz X). These spaces become a place for fans to gather, where fans can be themselves and even perhaps learn something about their own fandom and about themselves. Comic conventions become a communal area more so than bookstores, as many stores “commonly become uncomfortable or feel unwelcome as a result of the gazes of male patrons who are surprised to see women in that setting or by posters that frequently objectify women and/or glorify violence” (Pustz 8). Instead, many comic book fans who
are women gather at conventions, and purchase their texts online or at mass-book sellers. Understanding this from personal experience, I will be engaging other female fans in my film to underline this separation between the female fan and the comic book store. Since I plan on turning the camera on myself through a video-diary style interview, I will tell my own story of how the few times I’ve gone to a comic book store I have been uncomfortable, and how my own impressions of these stores has been developed through popular culture, for example in *The Simpsons* (1989) and Comic Book Guy’s character.

Pustz also insinuates why there are so many negative stereotypes associated with comic book fans. He argues, “many Americans – especially males – have read comics, with varying levels of involvement, as children and hence have some vague familiarity with the medium” (4). Pustz also believes that “most of these readers, though, abandon comic books at some point, deciding that they are not interesting (or, more likely, not cool), too expensive, or too juvenile” (4). As a middle school student, I too learned that comic books were not cool, that the people who read them were often taunted or picked last for kickball. In order to survive the social warfare that is high school, I stopped reading comics. Based on the few conversations I have had with other female fans, I expect to hear more stories similar to my own, and plan on having these stories in my film.

Similar to my own experience with comics, researcher Mel Gibson, author of “British Girls’ Comics, Readers and Memories,” began reading comics as a young girl. After being reprimanded by her teachers and friends, she became more driven to rebel and read *Batman* and *Captain America*. In her essay, she argues “against media effects by saying that comics couldn’t be straightforwardly creating male sexism, because I was
both a girl and a feminist, yet still found much to enjoy” (267). Unfortunately, Gibson fails to go into further detail of this notion in this article, and instead explores potential research questions. While it is common knowledge within the comic book scholarly community that many comic strips and books are sexist (DiPaolo 2007, Glascock and Preston-Schreck 2004, Packer 2009), there is little to nothing on how or why these comics are still interesting to female fans. Even though some scholars attempt to prove that there are feminist characters in comic books (Robbins 1999) and that there always have been, not many feminists explore how feminists themselves can enjoy comics or graphic novels such as Superman (Siegel and Shuster 1938), From Hell (Miller 1999), or Watchmen (Moore 1987).

Women Entering the Club

Of course women entering into various male dominated cultures, such as sports, rock music or NASCAR, is nothing new. In fact, female fans will soon become the main demographic of NASCAR race attendees (Hugenberg and Hugenberg 2008). Although women are part of the fan base and culture of these subsets, we continue to be marginalized within and outside of these groups. In these subcultures, the:

erositized fan is almost always female; the feminine side of fandom is manifested in the images of screaming teenage girls who try to tear the clothes off the Beatles or who faint at the touch of one of Elvis’s sweat-drenched scarves, or the groupies servicing the stars backstage after the concert in rockamentaries and porn videos. (Jenkins 15)

When the image of the women who are part of rock music culture is called upon, it is the scantily clad admirers (or stars, like Madonna slithering on the stage of the MTV Video
Music Awards in 1984) or drug addled Courtney Love wannabes running around on and behind the stage who are represented.

Though she doesn’t focus on female rock fans, Gayle Wald has written about the emergence of powerful women into the rock scene (Wald 1998). Wald focuses on Gwen Stefani and her group No Doubt as an example of “constructing narratives that disrupt patriarchal discourse within traditionally male rock subcultures” (588). In this, Stefani is attempting to illustrate how, although she is just a girl, she can rock just as hard as her male counterparts. Her music shows that women can be powerful forces within the culture. Wald asserts:

> the strategy of appropriating girlhood, like the word *girl* itself, signifies ambiguously: as a mode of culturally voiced resistance to patriarchal femininity; as a token of a sort of ‘gestural feminism’ that is complicit with the trivialization, marginalization, and eroticization of women within rock music cultures; and as an expression of postmodern ‘gender trouble’ that potentially recuperates girlhood. (588)

Through her research, Wald is arguing that female rockers in the music scene are challenging preconceived notions of women musicians. No longer are they objects to be sexualized and fetishized, but instead as an oppositional force to these stereotypes.

While Wald does not refer to female fans that are part of this subculture, her work is still valuable to my project. Her research is based on a subculture within the larger popular music scene. Parallels can be drawn between her research and the overarching goal in my film. While women have often been restricted in the rock scene based on gender binaries and stereotypes, there has been an upset to these boundaries. Likewise, my project will confront these labels and categories, but for female fans of comic books. Wald’s tone of protest and grrrl power in her article is one that I admire – she does not
shy away from her thesis or her project’s goal. She is not apologetic in her writing. Similarly, I will be upfront with the viewers of my documentary – my voice, and the social stance that I take in my film will be clear to my audience.

Roller derby is another example of where women have entered into a historically male-dominated culture. Until the beginning of the twenty-first century, the image of roller derby in popular culture was based on the popular film *Rollerball* (1975) and various television specials from the 1960s and 1970s (Finley 2010); a violent and dangerous sport that was only suited for male participants. Quickly, the female roller derby subculture began to grow, and currently has over 562 teams (Finley 2010). These women take roller derby extremely seriously, and are just as violent as their male counterparts. Nancy Finley, in her article “Skating Femininity: Gender Maneuvering in Women’s Roller Derby,” argues that the women are navigating between their feminine identity as well as the masculine identity that has been ascribed to roller derby. She describes this as gender maneuvering, and defines this term as a “collective effort to negotiate actively the meaning and rules of gender to redefine the hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity in the normative structure of a specific context” (362). She successfully illustrates how these women are actively participating in this historically patriarchal culture, and are attempting to create an identity for themselves. Similarly, my project will attempt to show how female fans negotiate their identity as women, possibly feminists, within the male-dominated comic fan subculture. My project will attempt to answer how these women define themselves, and how they interact with other people.
Putting this idea on the big screen, the documentary titled *Brutal Beauties: Tales of Rose City Rollers* (2010) attempts to show how these women negotiate their feminine identity in a masculine subculture. While the idea of this documentary is appealing to me for my project (women interacting in their subculture), the execution and content of this film is troubling. For example, one woman remarks that she is surprised that some of her roller derby teammates are doctors, teachers, psychiatrists, and mothers but they are all extremely tough. I felt that the movie was insinuating that a woman could not be tough or strong unless she was being physically beaten or placed in extremely violent situations (like roller derby). The insinuation that women cannot be strong, or be real women unless they are physically competent is problematic. Additionally, many of the women interviewed discuss how they take on a different persona in order to be tough enough on the derby floor. I believe that this masking of oneself is going to be a common thread in female identities in a male-dominated culture. In the comic culture, women often hide the fact that they are fans at all, adopting a different persona when it comes to their favorite books and movies. My film will explore this notion further, asking women about how forthcoming they are, and how they interact with other fans at the Denver Comic Convention, where they are able to be with other people who share their passion. Unlike Gayle Wald’s unforgiving and truthful article, which analyzes both the positive and negative standpoints of females entering rock music, this film seems to sweep its analyses under the rug so to speak. The women of this roller derby club are still controlled by the patriarchy in their culture – through coaches, referees, and medics all being male. This power dynamic is completely glossed over in the film, leaving its analysis of women entering into a male subculture simple and misleading. In comic book culture, men do
dominate the scene. My project will not shy away from this fact, and I plan on instead addressing this problem straight on through my interviews and observational footage. The image of vendors and artists, who the majority of are men, will speak for itself on the screen.

The style of the film is observational. The crew follows the participants through a variety of events, from their everyday lives of doing chores and going to work, prepping for a big game, daily roller derby practices, and the games themselves. Interspersed with these shots are interviews of the roller girls (and some of the guys) themselves. I enjoyed this style of documentary, even though the content was disturbing. Likewise, my film will also employ a similar method. While I will not follow my subjects in their daily activities, I will edit between interviews and the actual Comic Convention itself.

Methodology

The overall goal of my project is to tell a story that has yet to be told. The film will follow my own personal journey of attending Denver Comic Convention, and the struggle I have had thus far being a (female) comic book fan. While I will have the cameras turned on myself, I also plan on having interviews with other attendees at the Convention – both during and following the event. For whatever reason, being a female fan of comic book culture is embarrassing. It’s something that you don’t tell people. In fact, while sharing my excitement with my coworkers about seeing *The Avengers* (2012) twice, and barely being able to wait for *Prometheus* (2012) and the newest Batman (2012) movie to be released, I heard a chorus of agreement – but only from my male coworkers. In fact, after the conversation had diminished, one of the women in the group
came up to me to say that she too is a big fan, though never shares this fact with anyone. My reaction at the time was, “Exactly. This is why I need to make this film – because for whatever reason there is a stigma attached to women enjoying comics and comic book movies. There is nothing wrong with enjoying these things!” As we were slinking in the shadows of our staff café, making sure no one overheard us, we debated whether or not Bane is going to be a decent villain in *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012). It was almost as though she and I were talking about our love for something socially unacceptable, like some sort of fetish pornography or shooting heroin in our spare time.

After telling her my plan for my documentary, she became instantly engaged and excited – immediately offering herself for an interview, exclaiming that this is something that we need – a voice for the female fans, to celebrate our fandom. I realized that I want to answer the question as to why we, as women, feel ashamed to be comic book admirers.

Through a combination of documentary modes – observational, participatory, and self-observing (similar to a video diary) – my project will attempt to answer these questions as well as tracing my own journey and growth as a fan.

As someone who has always been interested in comic books, I quickly learned that it was not something that my female peers enjoyed, and the ones that did were often bullied for being different. So I, like my coworker, kept my enjoyment of comics under wraps, except around my dad, who read and collected comics as a child. It wasn’t until the last couple of months that I had begun to fully realize that social stigma associated with comic book culture (that losers who need to get a life read them, and that they really should move out of their parent’s basement). At roughly the same time, I realized that I was hesitant to share my own interest in Alan Moore’s *From Hell* (1999), Frank Miller’s
**Batman: The Dark Knight Returns** (1997), Robert Kirkman’s *The Walking Dead* (2003 - ), and the countless films based on the comic book universe. Slowly, I have started to disclose my love of these different media with my friends and family. Most are supportive, and some are even enthusiastic to be able to share their own passion for the medium. So why then, was I ever worried or concerned to share this part of my identity? This is another question I hope to explore by turning the camera onto myself as well as interviewing other women whose experience is similar.

As of now, in this pre-production stage, I have a fairly loose idea of what my final project will look like. I hope to string together personal video of myself, interviews of others (both male and female, during and after the Convention), and the Denver Comic Con itself into a documentary that explains and focuses on female fandom within the comic culture. While the film will begin with Comic Con – a recognizable event to any person – the film will be supplemented with interviews that delve deeper into the realm of female fandom and comic books. This may take me to comic bookstores, clubs, or meetings; though I am not yet sure about this. It is my goal to review the footage from Comic Con, and decide from there if I need supplemental footage or interviews, or if my film would benefit from filming in these locations.

I realize that filming at the first ever Denver Comic Convention will be challenging, and that events might happen that I had not planned on. The Denver Comic Con will start on Friday, June 15th, and end on Sunday, June 17th. I am prepared to adapt my strategy during the filming of the Convention itself, and accept the fact that my final project will probably differ slightly from my current production plan. I anticipate some sound bites from interviews, or just from observing the Convention itself, to change the
direction of my film slightly (or simply create a more clear direction for the voice of my film). My project will begin with a series of shots at the first day of the Denver Comic Convention. I want the audience to become acclimated with what they are going to be seeing, and to place them in a position of thinking about comic book culture. I will be interspersing this with voiceovers from both men and women – attendants of the Convention – on their experience and excitement during the event. I hope to have a lot of observational footage of the participants in costumes, of people being extremely excited about meeting some of their favorite stars and comic book writers/illustrators. I wish to have close-ups of items at the Convention, like collectibles that are in glass cases, and books that have been sealed in a hard plastic bag to stop any damage or degradation of the item. I would also like to have the ambient noise from the Convention – the chatter and excitement from the fans – playing low in the background underneath the interview voiceovers.

After a minute or two of this introduction, the screen will fade to black, and the title will appear (working title: The Encounter at Comic Con; an homage to the first episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, titled “Encounter at Farpoint” (1987)). After a few frames of silence, my own voice will deliver a brief lesson on women and comic book culture – from the *Saturday Night Live* skit to the present-day portrayals from *Comic Book Men* and *A Fan’s Hope*. The juxtaposition of men and women in the comic book fandom will become apparent. I will turn the camera to myself, explaining my own journey to this point – the moment leading up to going to the Denver Comic Con. While I am excited about this event, my own feelings are conflicted. I’m excited to be able to go
somewhere that other fans like myself are gathered, where we can all be ourselves comfortably and debate over who the best superhero is in *The Avengers*. Is it Ant-Man? Or maybe Thor? Are Hawkeye and Black Widow superheroes even though they don’t possess super powers?

While I am eager to participate in this space, I am also nervous about attending. It is almost as though I am worried what people will think of me if they find out that I attended a Convention – will they think I need a life? Will they assume that I am a loser like the characters from *Paul* (2011)? These are the questions I find myself asking, which is why I am initially hesitant to go to the Convention itself. I have also found myself telling people that I am attending the Con, but then quickly stating at I am also going to research and film for my thesis. Somehow qualifying the reason for why I am going to an event for comic books makes it okay to go; apparently, my psyche believes that going for educational reasons is a more legitimate reason for attending than for the love of comics.

I anticipate a lot of these sorts of questions and inner conflicts before I attend the Convention, and I whole-heartedly plan on turning the camera on myself to explore these insecurities.

Another concern that has recently been brought forth is how I will be able to separate my enjoyment and first time experience at the Comic Con with the actual process and focus of shooting footage for my documentary. This will be a challenge; there is no doubt. However, I believe that preparation will definitely be beneficial. In this, I mean to discuss with my production assistant/camera operator exactly what footage I would like to have. I have already planned a series of meetings with this person leading up to the Convention. Additionally, I will provide my operator with this proposal, so that
he might be able to gain better knowledge of what my overall vision for the film is. Finally, I have made sure that there will be ‘down time’ during the Convention – moments where I will not be attending a specific event or program. This way, I will be able to focus on shooting specific footage, such as observational footage and interviews.

After introducing my documentary, I want to be able to follow my own experience and emotions while I am attending the Convention. At this moment, I have two press passes (one for myself, and one for my camera operator). I hope to have three additional passes, and have been in contact with Denver Comic Con regarding this. In an ideal world, I would have two crews (one camera operator and one sound person). The first crew would follow myself and document my experience. The second crew would film additional footage, as well as engage participants and interview them. However, if I am only given the two passes that I currently have, I will have to balance between obtaining interviews, observational footage, and my own experiences. This will be difficult, but I think that it will be feasible. Being able to interview the participants myself will allow me to interact directly with other fans, converse with them, and get to have more control over what is filmed. I would like to film as much of the Convention as possible. I will have a location to store equipment, download footage when needed, and recharge camera batteries. From this, I will be able to film (mostly uninterrupted) as much of the Comic Convention as possible.

With my press pass, I have been given permission to film in the convention halls, film all attendees, and film the exhibitors. I am currently restricted from filming the speeches that the various celebrities are giving, though I am in communication with the Denver Comic Con on receiving permission to film these events also. I would like to visit
the costume contest, and talk to the men and women who have entered into the show. I would also like to interview the different exhibitors – from comic book store owners/employees to artists. Additionally, I have been in contact with Sci-Fi Speed Dating, a speed-dating event that travels to and from different comic/science fiction conventions all over the United States. I have been given permission to film the speed-dating event itself, the participants (if they are willing), and the crew/event staff of the event. My overall goal at the Convention is to record my own reactions to the events at the Convention, film observational footage, programming and activities, and interview participants. I wish to gain as much film as possible from the three days.

Though I am still formulating and editing a list of questions for the interviews at the Convention, their tone will be friendly and honest. Starting questions will focus on favorite comic books and superheroes. The questions will then move to the fan’s experience at the Convention and with comic books in general. Finally, they will focus more on gender, and will differ slightly depending on the gender of the person who is being interviewed. A working list of questions can be found in the table at the end of this section, in Figure One. In July and August, after reviewing my footage, I plan on interviewing different participants further. These interviews will delve deeper into the question of why there are no female voices in the comic book fan community. The interviews will also ask for reactions and responses to the Convention and its specific events (such as meeting a favorite star or illustrator).

Based on these interviews, I plan on intercutting between footage from the Convention, my own experiences and commentary, and Conversations with other fans. I hope to explore why women have a difficult time entering into the comic book culture,
and why there is this problem. However, I am open to the many possibilities that could present themselves to me during the filming and editing process. I have found that there is a negative stigma attached to being a fan, and an even more negative association with being a female fan. I would also like to celebrate the female comic book fan – to show that she doesn’t necessarily have to be a loser; that it is okay to enjoy comic books at any age, and to be any gender. I hope to prove that being a female fan does not mean that you have to dress in a hypersexualized costume at Conventions in order to fit in. Enjoying comic books and comic-related media is acceptable; to prove that being a fan does not mean that one has to be fanatical. This short documentary will hopefully encourage and inspire other female fans, both young and old, to proudly declare their enjoyment of comic books and comic-related culture, hold their head high, and wear their comic book fandom on their sleeve.
Figure One - Sample Questions

What did you have for breakfast today?*
Please state your name and contact information.
Is this the first comic convention you have visited?
Who did you dress as? Why that character?
What is your favorite comic book character?
When did you start reading comic books?
What is your favorite comic book movie?
Which comic book stores do you visit – or where do you go to purchase your books?
Can you tell me of a time when you felt uncomfortable telling people about your interest in comic books (or comic book-related media)?
Have you always been so forward with your comic book fandom? Why or why not?
Have you ever had a partner that was/is a comic book fan? How were your assumptions of that person different from previous partners?

For women:
Describe what it was like enjoying comic books as a child/teenager/etc.
Do find yourself acting or being treated differently because you are a female fan of comic books?
How do you feel about the portrayal of women in comic books and films based on comics?
Compared to the other things that you are a fan of (television, movies, books), how does that type of fandom differ from being a comic book fan?

For men:
Do your (female) friends also enjoy comic books?
At the places you go to share your hobby (such as a comic book store), are there many women?
Have you encountered many women at conventions?
What is your impression of female comic book fans?
Name some female characters from comic books.

*This question is mostly to check levels, and to put the interviewee in a more relaxed, conversational tone (as well as getting them to start thinking of themselves).
Projected Budget

The table located in Appendix A contains an estimate of what the total expense is to produce my documentary film. Currently, the shooting schedule is set for ten days total. Three of these days will take place on location at the Denver Comic Convention in June. The other seven days are reserved for interviewing participants of the Convention, after the event has occurred. Based on the shooting schedule, the equipment will be rented at least one day before shooting is scheduled, and will be returned at least one day after shooting ends. Since I will be renting the equipment and editing facilities from the University of Denver, there is currently no estimated cost in the production and post-production phases of my film. The production assistant, as well as the interviewees, will be volunteering their time and service – they will be compensated with food as well as in the credits of the final cut. While filming the interviews with the attendees of the Denver Comic Convention in July or August, there will be food and beverages provided. Since my family owns a restaurant in Fort Collins, I have already had some food and beverage costs promised to me as an in-kind donation. Additionally, during the Denver Comic Convention, meals will be purchased for the crew depending on the convention hours – dinner on Friday, all three meals Saturday, and both lunch and dinner on Sunday. The majority of the out-of-pocket expenses will be used towards lodging, travel, and food costs.

Since my project is taking place in Denver, Colorado, there are no airfare costs. Additionally, the cost of lodging is minimal, as crew and participants will be staying in their local abodes. However, during the three days of the Denver Comic Convention, a hotel room will be rented that is in the immediate vicinity of the Denver Convention.
Center. This will allow for the storage of equipment/cases, and will give the filmmakers
the opportunity to download footage and recharge/change camera batteries when
necessary. Because there is a special event occurring that weekend (Denver Comic Con),
hotel rates are unseasonably high. Additionally, a car will be parked at the hotel during
the stay, in case of emergency or a problem with the equipment. It is necessary that the
filmmakers have a way of travelling if needed. Traveling to and from the Denver Comic
Convention will be minimal as well, as the film is being made locally. Depending on
where the interviewees are travelling to and/or from, gasoline cards will be issued.

Audience

From the negative stereotypes of comic book fans, I would hope that my film’s
audience would be anyone who enjoys the subject of comic books, yet mostly targeting
those that may not feel very comfortable with their identity as a fan. More realistically,
however, based on the subject matter, my audience will be both men and women ages 18-
35, though recent films based on comic books seem to have a wider demographic, and
appeal to all ages and genders (Gray 2008, Vanairsdale 2010, Gray 2011, McClintock
2012). Ideally, I would also like to appeal to the under-18 female demographic. As a
young woman, seeing a documentary like this would have definitely encouraged me to be
more forthcoming and comfortable with my fandom. In fact, seeing something like this
would have perhaps prevented me from giving up comic books as a young girl.
Hopefully, this film will encourage these girls who might not feel confident enough to
enjoy comic-book related media (or at least do not feel comfortable with publicly
professing their enjoyment of these texts) to be themselves. Finally, my audience would
also include people who enjoy watching documentaries. This is a wide audience in terms of gender and age.

In order to reach all of these demographics, I would release my film onto YouTube and/or Vimeo, where a wide audience could watch the documentary and share it with others. The dissemination of my film to bloggers, fan sites (of comic books and related media), and other appropriate websites would aid my attempt to reach my audience. Additionally, I plan on entering my film into a range of film festivals, where it would receive more awareness. Furthermore, I would hope to screen the film at various comic conventions if appropriate. I am aware that Denver Comic Convention is interested in this possibility for next year’s convention. Finally, if there is an interest, I would invest in distributing my film on DVD to various persons and perhaps even to schools.
Chapter Two:
Pre-Production Analysis

Expect the Unexpected

I had very little time to plan and film the bulk of my project. The time between my thesis proposal approval and the start of the Denver Comic Convention was a little over a week. I knew that this would be a danger going into the project. Having never attended any sort of convention – save for an academic convention in my undergraduate career – I did not have a clear idea of what to expect. Unfortunately, I had never visited the location where the first Denver Comic Convention was to be held, so I wasn’t sure what the layout of the Colorado Convention Center in Denver, Colorado would look like. I did not have the chance to visit prior to June 15th, 2012 (the start of the Con) before shooting either. I had no idea what the lighting was like, but I did know that there were large windows lining the center. I assumed that there would be some sort of natural light, but based on my prior visits to academic conventions, that the hall itself would be artificially lighted. I also knew from driving around downtown Denver that the hall was extremely large. According to the website Visit Denver, the Colorado Convention Center has a capacity of over 10,000 people, 584,000 square feet exhibit space on one level, a 50,000 square foot ballroom, in addition to other ballrooms, meeting rooms, and a theater
(VisitDenver.com). However, I was unsure what rooms would be utilized or how they would be set up.

From the films that I watched about conventions, mainly *Trekkies* and *Comic Con IV: A Fan's Hope*, I knew the type of things that would be there. I assumed that there would be many people in costumes – cosplaying – but I didn’t know what type of costume, or the extent to which people would be dressing up. Would it be items found in anyone’s closet, in an attempt to resemble a beloved character? Or would these costumes be something that people purchased at a costume store? Perhaps they would be built from scratch, with the wearer sewing and piecing together fabric and props to make it as authentic as possible. I had no idea. Costuming was central to my thesis, at least in the preproduction phase. I wanted to illustrate how sexualized women are in the comic book realm, and cosplay is central to that theory. From what I saw in movies and within television – *Comic Book Men* and *The Big Bang Theory* included – women who were dressed up as a comic book character showed a lot of skin. Suddenly Wonder Woman was wearing high heels, and looked as though she would fall out of her top; and Pikachu was wearing a bikini. I was extremely curious as to the type of costumes I would see, and planned on filming people walking around in their choice of character.

I also knew that there would be exhibitors – people who sold various items. These vendors ranged from comic book dealers to collectibles, movie posters to steam punk clothing. I definitely wanted to peruse these vendors for things that I hoped would shed some light on how women are objectified and literally sold as objects. Even though this was a family event, I had seen risqué comic books during my research, and I know that the phrase “sex sells” wasn’t created out of thin air. For example, the comic book
character Power Girl has been portrayed as slender, but with a large bust. Her costume is a tight, white one-piece, with a cut out to reveal her cleavage, and the bottom portion on the leotard cut very high on her thighs. This character has had success in comic books, collectible action figures, as well as cartoons that are marketed to children and adults alike. While Power Girl is a strong, powerful character, and makes it clear that she can fend for herself, her costume is certainly risqué and revealing. Similar collectibles of female characters were abundant online, and I hoped to see them in person as well.

After combing through the Denver Comic Convention website to see what or who else would be there, I found myself looking at something called Artists Alley. Essentially, Artists Alley was marketed as a separate section within the Convention where illustrators, writers, and creators could sit at a booth, meet with fans, and sell their work. Not much was published on who exactly would be in Artists Alley, as the “celebrity” comic book persons were with the other celebrity guests. I was eager, however, to see how many of these artists were women. I was even hoping to talk to them, and to get their reactions on what it was like to be a female in the field. In addition, I was curious to ask them what their observations were regarding women and comic books in general – from fans (were there many women readers?) to characters (did they think there was a difference between how they portrayed their female characters versus how male artists portrayed heroines?).

Originally, I had envisioned my documentary to be about women fans – the fans that attended conventions such as Comic Con. I wanted to give them – us – a voice, someone or something that we could relate to. I originally wanted to be behind the camera at all times, and perhaps narrate the clips together into a critical analysis of women and comics. Throughout the creation of my thesis proposal, and following my
committee meeting, I realized that in order to be more effective, I really needed to put myself in front of the camera. I was completely uncomfortable with this idea, as I don’t enjoy being in front of the camera. I wasn’t sure that I could have been honest with myself or honest with the camera as it followed me through my own experiences. I had been intent on being a filmmaker of *Encounter at Comic Con*, not its main star. However, I agreed to take on more of a central role in the subject of my film.

Additionally, during the thesis proposal meeting, I brought up that there was an event at Denver Comic Con, and at many comic conventions across the nation, called Sci-Fi Speed Dating. The idea behind it is that single geeks will be able to find each other in a safe and low-pressure environment. Single as I was, I wasn’t sure that I was interested in (a) going speed dating or (b) having it filmed. My cameraman, and some of my friends who figured if nothing else, I would have some fascinating stories to tell afterwards, encouraged me to sign up. I had definitely waffled with the idea – some days I was interested, others I was mortified by the notion of having my personal life splashed up on a screen for the world to see. My committee members seemed to like the idea and what I could possibly glean from the experience – mainly what sort of stereotypes I might encounter or might not. I decided to sign up, and was able to get a spot (apparently it had filled up shortly after I had reserved my seat). I did not know what to expect – I had never speed dated before, and I was both nervous and a bit scared at the prospect of doing it. One of my professors suggested perhaps some liquid courage before I went in to SciFi Speed Dating, and I wholeheartedly agreed that that was a spectacular idea. If I was uncomfortable with the footage, I realized I did not have to include it in my film.
I had a rough idea of what I wanted to film, but wasn’t sure how this would play out during the three shooting days. Before I had even had my thesis proposal approved, I requested press passes from Denver Comic Convention. From this experience, I certainly learned how to interact with large organizations. Perhaps it was because 2012 was the first year that this convention was held, but I was astounded by the seemingly lack of organization. When I had first requested passes, I received an e-mail from the PR company reminding me that the application for a press pass was due the next day. My prompt and frantic reply was met with an apology – apparently they had overlooked my initial application. Then, in an attempt to have more footage, I contacted the Denver Comic Con staff, as well as the public relations firm in regards to obtaining more press passes. This was done promptly, but my e-mails went unanswered. I later found out that I was not the only person who was having trouble eliciting a response from them, but rather it was a wide spread epidemic. Either way, I was not granted additional press passes.

Another event that occurred during the Denver Comic Convention weekend was Rock the Con – an after party of sorts at the Hard Rock Café on the 16th Street Mall in Denver. I thought this would be a great experience to shoot, especially since I was now one of the subjects of the film. I would have likely gone to this concert anyway, so I felt that filming it would give the project and myself more interest and perhaps more legitimacy. I wasn’t sure if I would use the footage later, but I would rather have too much footage than not enough (especially since I could not reshoot this event later).

Since Rock the Con was not directly associated with Denver Comic Con, I had to contact both the organizers of the concert as well as the Hard Rock Café to gain
permission to film at the show. The concert organizers were more than helpful, willing and excited to have me there. Working with such a large corporation such as the Hard Rock Café was a bit more difficult. I was asked to work with their legal department at their headquarters on the matter. I was also asked if I had liability insurance for my crew and to film. As a student filmmaker, I certainly did not and was told that the school did not provide any coverage for students. Luckily, I was able to work something out with the Hard Rock Café, and was granted permission to film as long as I posted signs alerting attendees that they might be filmed.

Staffing and Equipment

Since I only had two press passes, I used them for myself as well as my cameraman. Because the Denver Comic Con was happening in the middle of June, many students had either graduated, moved out of the state, were on vacation, or had gone home for the summer. This left my pool of possibly cameramen smaller then I would have liked. Since I could not afford to pay a crewmember, this was also a deterrent for some people who might have been willing to assist me in my project. I was hoping that the prospect of free food and beverage, in addition to visiting the first ever Denver Comic Convention with an all access media pass, would be enough to persuade someone to join my team.

Luckily, I had worked with Chris Pacheco over the previous two quarters, and had some knowledge of his filming style and ability. While we were working together on a short narrative film, I was able to see how we worked together on a crew, which was very important. Essentially, over the three day period, I needed someone who would be willing
and able to film when we needed to film, instead of being distracted by some panel and heading off to that. I had brought up my conundrum of having only a two-person crew, and Mr. Pacheco volunteered to be my cameraman. I knew that he would film and do whatever was in the best interest of my project, so I was eager to have him on my team.

I was also able to persuade Jesus Sierra, a recent graduate of the University of Denver, to visit the convention and take still photographs of the general convention area. He was able to use a DSLR, which I felt gave me the best photographs when compared to my digital camera. I had planned that Mr. Sierra would take photographs on Saturday, the day (according to various blogs) when the most people attend. I had envisioned using his photographs in my documentary in case I needed something supplemental that I did not get with my camera. For his help on that day, I purchased him a one-day pass and guaranteed him food and beverage.

Additionally, I had become friends with Ms. Sasha Ward, who assisted me on a couple of shoots that I had been on. Though she wasn’t a film student, she had an understanding of how to hold a mic, and how to work with people. I asked for her assistance for all three days as well. She had already purchased a three day pass, so there was no added expense for her. I planned on having her assist me with holding the microphone, as well as organizing release forms from the people I interviewed.

As far as equipment went, I rented what I would need from the University of Denver’s Media, Film and Journalism Studies Department. I decided to check out an AF100 camera (with a tripod) as well as a GoPro, which was new to the department. I knew that my mother was attending the Convention on Saturday and Sunday, and she was willing to wear the camera on her head for a bit each day. I felt that the GoPro would
give me good material to work with, and could only assist in gaining supplemental
footage. I also checked out a wired lavaliere, as I had had problems with the wireless
lavaliere's picking up reception and sounding tinny. I ended up not using the lavaliere at
all since many costumes would have made it difficult to conceal, and when we
interviewed a group of people, it would have been very difficult to know which one
person to mic. In addition to that, I had rented a handheld microphone. I had decided to
not check out a lighting kit, as I was unsure about electrical outlets, space, and
realistically it would be very difficult for two people to carry over all of our gear if it
included the kit.
Chapter Three:  
Production Review

And So It Begins…

Throughout the three days of filming - Friday, Saturday and Sunday - I found shooting to have gone extremely smoothly. While there were some unexpected bumps in the road, I feel that I was prepared for the unexpected. Every single person I had talked to about filming a documentary told me that shoots rarely, if ever, go exactly according to plan. Even the books on documentary filmmaking that I read stated the same thing. However, because I did not know what to expect at the Denver Comic Convention, never having attended any sort of fan-based gathering, I did not have a solid plan. I knew the type of footage I wanted, but the means to achieving that end were fluid. Going into production, I was ready to adapt to any sort of change in my filming outline/schedule, and I believe that this assisted in the overall success of the three days.

The production process began on Friday before I headed over to the Colorado Convention Center. As per the suggestion of my committee during my thesis proposal session, I was to have a more central role in my documentary. I decided that I needed to somehow document my feelings during the Con, and taking notes wasn't going to cut it. After weighing my different options, I chose to have a sit-down, video journal during my down time during the weekend. On Friday, I sat down with the camera, alone in my
apartment, and attempted to have a heart-to-heart with the lens. It was difficult, and I wasn't sure if I was coming off as sincere. I tried to be as honest as possible, but I couldn't help myself from "acting" or "playing to" the camera. In other words, I found myself going off on unrelated tangents because I thought they would make better sound bytes.

After recording my diary entry, I headed over to my documentary's headquarters - the hotel room that I had rented for Friday night through Monday morning. I wanted to be as close as possible to the action, and in case I needed to recharge a battery, I only had to walk across the street. Once I arrived, I changed and became ready to go over to the Convention Hall. Mr. Pacheco, Ms. Ward and my friend Tommy Faut met me at the room a few minutes before the Denver Comic Convention was to open. I went over the plan with Mr. Pacheco, and we decided to only take over the camera and a microphone. I wanted to film my own reactions to the convention at this time - since it was likely that the least amount of people were to be attending Friday, I felt that it was ideal for walking around and seeing what the exhibition hall had to offer.

At this point, I trusted Mr. Pacheco with filming independently on Friday. We had met the previous week to discuss my production plan - when I wanted interviews, the type of interviews, the sort of footage I was hoping to have at the end of the weekend. I was confident at this time that he would be aware of the type of shots that I wanted to have. As we headed out of the hotel, the camera was rolling. The evening went smoothly, and I was able to explore the exhibition hall without having to worry about my documentary too much. This allowed me to enjoy myself, and have fun. Once we spent a
few hours walking around, we decided to call it a night and start again early in the morning.

Have Fun Storming the Castle!

The next day, Saturday, was the longest day of the Convention. The hall opened early in the morning, and the Rock the Con after party was that night. When Mr. Pacheco arrived, we went over an outline of what I hoped to accomplish that day. During the morning, and up through lunch time, I wanted to try to interview as many people as possible. During the lunch hour, I was to get prepared for SciFi Speed Dating. After that, we were going to break for lunch, then conduct more interviews. Mid-afternoon, we would break until after dinner. This longer break would allow me to record my video diary entry, as well as give my crewman a chance to enjoy the convention himself. Finally, we would meet up to attend Rock the Con. During this time, I also instructed my mother on how to use the GoPro, and to just walk and explore the convention naturally (as though a camera wasn't on top of her head).

Once we had agreed on the plan, we headed over to the convention center with our camera, tripod, and microphones. We had decided the previous night to set up behind a row of vendors. The divider between the vendors and the location where I had chosen was a blue long piece of fabric. This was definitely my preferred background over the other choice - which was a wall that appeared to have been in a gym. I also threw around the idea of shooting in the lobby, but it was much too crowded and extremely loud. The lighting was not ideal. The only lighting in the exhibition hall was overhead, florescent
lighting. It was bright, but gave off an unnatural tint on film. However, there were no available outlets, and the space was too crowded to set up any lights.

After setting up the frame, I began to search for potential interviewees. This was much more difficult then I had initially anticipated. I found myself to be shy and nervous - two emotions that worked against me. I felt unsure of myself, and had little confidence in what I was doing. Luckily, Ms. Ward was there, and had none of these qualms. After a while, we had a great system going. Ms. Ward would approach people who were walking in our vicinity, ask them if they would be willing to partake in a short interview, have them fill out a release, and then we - myself and Mr. Pacheco - would record them. On Sunday, we even had a line of people waiting to talk to us!

At first, I instructed Ms. Ward on the type of person I wanted to interview - someone outgoing, who will hopefully be able to speak in front of a camera. We did our best to determine this during our pre-interview warm-up. This included talking to the potential interviewee about my project, as well as asking them a few questions about themselves. If they were a strong speaker, I recorded an interview with them. However, this was not foolproof. I found that some interviewees would clam up once the red light on the camera lit up. When this happened, I would politely cut the interview short by not asking any follow-up questions. I would also employ this method when a subject did not have interesting or relevant sound bytes.

On Saturday morning, we interviewed a little over a dozen attendees. I was content with this, especially knowing that all day Sunday would be dedicated to filming interviews. At lunch time, we went back to headquarters to change batteries, and to drop off the tripod and microphones before SciFi Speed Dating. Afterwards, I took someone's
advice and had a shot of liquid courage. Mr. Pacheco and I walked across the street of the Denver Comic Convention to a restaurant and bar. We brought the camera along and filmed the event, though I wasn't sure if I wanted it to be in my documentary. Afterwards, we grabbed the tripod and headed over to SciFi Speed Dating (also at the Convention Center).

We weren't sure what the set-up of the speed dating room would be. I was glad that I could trust Mr. Pacheco to film the event on his own, as I was preoccupied with participating in it, and therefore could not effectively direct the shoot. One of the male participants was a no-show, which meant that one female participant was not speed dating during each round. When it came to be my turn to have no one sitting across from me, Mr. Pacheco was right there to ask me for my immediate impression.

Following the speed dating event, we went back to headquarters to drop off the equipment, and then out to lunch. Following this, I decided that we should take a break until Rock the Con that night. I went back to headquarters, collected the camera and tripod, and went back to my apartment. I had decided the day before that I wanted the journal to be filmed in the same location, so that the viewer could easily recognize that the shot was my reflection of Comic Con, and not an interview or an event similar to speed dating. Once I was at my apartment, I decided to wash up, and then go over the day’s events. Finally, I headed back to the hotel, where I met Ms. Ward and Mr. Pacheco.

Before we headed over to the Hard Rock Cafe, I printed off signs that stated that there would be filming on the premise (of the restaurant), and that by entering the restaurant, one was agreeing to be filmed. For this event, I decided to only take the GoPro. I knew from previous experiences that the AF100 does not do exceptionally well
in poor lighting, and that the GoPro performed slightly better. I also wanted to be able to
thank these two for assisting me during the weekend, and let loose a little. Additionally,
the neighborhood between our hotel and the Hard Rock Cafe was not the greatest.
Therefore, I did not want to have to carry several thousand dollars worth of equipment
several blocks in downtown Denver in the middle of the night.

The concert was indeed dark, but the GoPro performed very well. The after party
was not what I was expecting, which is truly to be expected while filming. I had been to
after parties before, with people mingling, dancing, talking, and bands playing. Perhaps it
was because of the venue, but I found very few people to be engaging with each other.
After posting the signs on each entry and exit at the Hard Rock Cafe, the bands started
and the crowd came trickling in. The music was also incredibly loud. I asked Mr.
Pacheco to walk around with the GoPro, and to move around as though he were there to
enjoy the party firstly. After a short time, I pulled the plug on filming. It wasn't what I
was expecting, and I didn't see it fitting into the story I was trying to tell.

So Say We All

On Sunday, we had a later start. After lunch, we started filming interviews. This
was when I interviewed the bulk of my subjects. I also felt more comfortable asking
questions and following-up on answers. For the first half of the day, we shot at our
original location. However, we quickly found out that the Denver Comic Convention had
decided to use the overhead public address system. Every few minutes, something would
be announced. The interviews were being interrupted, and I realized that we were losing
our interviewees answers when the PA system was on.
It was at this point that I decided to move the camera out into the lobby. This was an extremely bright space, with floor-to-ceiling windows. It was sunny outside, which made lighting inside this space difficult. This further complicated where we could film. Unfortunately, the location with the best lighting was not feasible, as we would have been blocking an entrance and exit. Therefore, we interviewed subjects against a harsh light.

By the end of the day, we had interviewed many more subjects. I was very happy with how the interviews went. I was hoping to have interviewed artists and creative persons, but it was not viable based on how the convention hall was organized. Creative persons were intermittently at their booths, and were often swarmed with fans. Even if they were not busy, they choose not to leave their booths, which is completely understandable. While I was disappointed that I was unable to record any interviews with them, I felt confident that I had enough footage to tell my story.

On Sunday night, I packed up everything and headed back to my apartment for one last journal entry. In retrospect, I almost wish that I had paid better attention to how I would have looked on camera at this time. I was sort of disheveled looking, but I suppose that was the truth of the moment. I had just finished participating in a wonderful weekend of filming and attending the first ever Denver Comic Convention.
Chapter Four:
Post-Production Discussion

With Great Power There Must Also Come Great Responsibility

For me, the postproduction process was certainly the most difficult part of this entire documentary. I'm would not consider myself an editor, even though I can piece something together. It takes a lot of talent to edit something well, and I realize that this is not my strength. I also struggled with stringing together my interviews, my own experiences, and still shots to create a coherent and interesting story. I had decided early on, however, to divide the film into three different parts based on each day of the convention. Each segment would include my own experience as well as a collection of interview clips.

Unfortunately, I was unable to review all of the footage during the weekend. We were nonstop shooting from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon once the convention hall closed. Based on the few snippets I had seen, I felt that I had had the shots that I needed. I had many hours of footage to review, including about eight hours of footage from the GoPro. This was a tedious task, but I found some great shots hidden in the middle of a long segment, so it was definitely worth my time to sift through that footage.

I also began to transcribe my interviews. It was at this point that I realized I had made a mistake while interviewing subjects. I did not plan on having my own voice on
camera when I asked the subject a question, and therefore that audio was muffled and quiet. During the actual interview, I did not request that the person or persons that I was interviewing answer the question with the question as part of their answer. For example, I usually asked what the interviewee was dressed up as, even if it was clear that they were not cosplaying. Luckily, some respondents would begin their answer with something along the lines of "I'm dressed up as..." while others would simply state the name of the character.

At the time, I was not thinking about how this would cut together in the edit bay. My inexperience at interviewing subjects was clear to me while I began transcribing. I was worried that half of my sound bytes would be unusable. Even though I had this hiccup, I continued to transcribe almost all of the interviews from the weekend. Those that I did not were ones with subjects that were too quiet or shy once they were in front of the lens. I also began to transcribe my journals, but decided to summarize each one instead. This allowed me to have a clearer idea of what I was talking about and feeling during the convention, and therefore would assist me in deciding which interviews I wanted to use.

I began to edit my project using Avid software. This was the same software that I was using at my place of employment. However, I found it to be less than user friendly for someone who is somewhat technologically challenged as myself. Later on in the editing process, I switched over to using the Adobe Creative Suite, and relied heavily on Photoshop, After Effects, and Premier. I believe that this change in editing software truly gave my film life.
This Episode was Badly Written

It took me a very long time to complete my first rough cut, which I must admit I later deleted. It was a cut that I was extremely unhappy with, so much so that I wanted to erase it from my hard drive and let Alan Smithee take all the credit for. This cut contained less of my journal entries and more interviews. I realized that I had basically taken myself out of the story, except to essentially narrate the interviews. The entire segment on speed dating was gone. It lacked a personal touch, it lacked depth and emotion. The shots were boring, and the transitions were worse. It wasn't critical of anything or questioning the status quo - it just was. I loathed it.

Starting from scratch wasn't easy, but it was necessary. If I had stuck with my original cut, I would have been extremely unhappy with the work I produced. It wouldn't have been good for me personally or professionally. I was still hesitant to put myself front and center, but I tried to. My second version also left out the speed dating event. Watching the footage together with my video diary made me uncomfortable. I did not like seeing myself so vulnerable on the screen. Without my vulnerabilities though, I realized that my second cut was still lacking something. It was at this point in the process that my own vision of what my film would look like began to shift. I realized that the film I had set out to make in my proposal wasn’t going to happen as I had planned. It took me a while to acknowledge and accept this fact (and a terrible unmoving cut of my film). I realized that I could still make a movie that I was proud of, even though it wasn’t the movie I had planned on. As I rewatched and reevaluated my footage, I began to piece together a film that had a stronger sense of myself in it.
My third cut included the speed dating, as well as more of the video journal. It was an improvement in tone, but it was still boring. I had kept with the same transitions I had used in the version-that-shall-not-be-named, and it was not reflective of the fun and exciting nature of the piece. After talking to my advisor, Professor Rodney Buxton, regarding this problem, I felt that I had a solution. Professor Buxton suggested that I make the transitions look like a comic book - as though the frame was in a comic book itself. I loved this idea. It took away an element of seriousness that I had wanted originally, and made the film more fun. It went along with my new focus – one of my own transition and journey – by celebrating it. I felt that these new transitions would make the film more enjoyable to watch, which was definitely a problem with my second cut. The transition between the film that I had originally planned on creating to a film that was about my own journey was continuing to develop, and these new comic book style transitions only strengthened my new perspective. By becoming part of a comic book – even if it was in these transitions – I was more confident in my own fandom (both on and off the screen).

Unfortunately, I had no idea how to implement it. I played around on After Effects and Premier for hours with no luck. I set up an appointment to meet with a friend who had won several Emmys for his work that were edited and created using the Adobe Creative Suite. Unfortunately, that meeting was canceled due to an illness, and I again tried googling what I wanted. I'm not entirely certain how, but I ended up on a YouTube video of a person teaching the viewer how to animate pictures. From this I was able to painstakingly build something that resembled a comic strip, and animate a still so that it appeared that the clip came from a comic book.
With more fine-tuning and more hours spent exploring different styles and types of animation in After Effects, I created something that I was very happy with. Timing, on the other hand, was a bit trickier. I tend to edit shots together rapidly, instead of letting them sit on the screen for more than just a few frames, and affect my audience. To counter this, my initial transitions went on for a bit longer than necessary. After soliciting opinions from professors, professionals, and lay people alike, I cut the transitions down slightly. Since the cuts were quicker, it allowed the audience to continue to stay engaged with the film. It also allowed for more visual illustrations of what I was referring to, such as photographs of graphic novels or comic books. The quicker transitions were imperative to the overall tone of my finished project, because the timing blended better with my new focus. If I had created the film that I had originally intended, longer cuts would have been more appropriate, to allow a critical stance to sink in with the audience. These shorter cuts allowed the viewer to experience the convention as I had – almost a whirlwind of a weekend meeting new people and seeing new things.

Try Not; Do, or Do Not – There is No Try

Once I had the main focus and track down in my cut, I began splicing together the interviews. This was tricky because, as I stated earlier, many of my subjects did not answer the question with the question as part of their answer. I decided to lead in on a series of clips with the initial subject answering the question with context, and then allowing each remaining interview in that collection to be more vague in the answer. In other words, the first subject in a series would begin by stating something like, "I am
dressed up as..." while subsequent subjects might only be heard and seen responding with the character's name that they are dressed up as.

The first section of interviews, my subjects are discussing who they are dressed up as. For this section, my thesis advisor suggested that I illustrate what those characters look like. I decided this was a great idea, especially if someone doesn't quite know who these characters are. I also wanted to have still photographs from various comic books, either for transitions during my 'self reflection' time or between scenes. This improved the tone of my film, from my original critical and serious documentary, to one of celebration and fun. As I was weaving my way through my own personal journey both before, during and after the convention, I waded through comic books, graphic novels, and the like. These still images paralleled my own journey, and illustrated what I was referring to for viewers who may not have known otherwise. I enlisted the help of Michelle Cannon, a photographer, to assist in taking these photographs. While perusing a comic book store during this process, I found *Amé-Comi Girls*, a comic book series that focuses on female characters and has an anime style. I wanted to include some of these images, and used my own camera to take them. These images of superheroes and villains that are popularly shown as men have been turned into women, and they are still just as strong and powerful as their male counterparts.

I also questioned whether or not to give the name of the participant as a lower third. I went back to *Trekkies* to see how the creators of that film dealt with this. I knew that I wanted to include many different interviews, and some responses were extremely short. I recalled that *Trekkies* had a similar set-up, with many interviews with convention guests. In that documentary, the creators only give the subjects name as a lower third if
they are a celebrity, special guest, or one of the few main subjects of the film. Responses and interviews from convention guests were included, but not given a lower third. I felt that this would not work for my own project. I wanted to give women a voice – not keep them nameless. Therefore, I gave name keys to each interviewee. I feel that this only strengthens the feminist perspective of my film by recognizing each female that I interviewed as a strong female role model. Often times women are not recognized, either directly through the choice of not name keying or giving them credit, or indirectly by not hearing their voice. I wanted to ensure that these women were heard and acknowledged as both strong women and general members of the community of comic book culture and at large.

Additionally, many of the clips have either an iris transition or a page turning transition. I begin my documentary with page turns, to give the idea that the film is part of a larger comic book of sorts. In the second set of interviews, I use the iris transition since my interviewees are discussing what it feels like to be photographed at cons; the iris imitate the shutter of a camera lens. In the third set of interviews, I use a dissolve. My own feelings at that point, on day three, are of acceptance and happiness. The convention is a place where we were all able to get together and be ourselves. While we maintain our own individuality, as geeks and nerds, we are on a more level ground. The dissolves are supposed to mimic this idea by seamlessly transitioning between one interviewee to the other. The final portion of my film reverts back to page turns. Just like many comic books, even though this is the end of my documentary, it is not necessarily the end of the story. The series progresses, the characters grow, even if these tales are never told or published.
Finally, I added original music. From previous experiences, I knew that students from the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music often were willing to compose original works for short films. I inquired about composers, and found three that were eager and willing to compose something. The first two were graduate students. One of these students had already composed some works that he felt would make an excellent fit with my film. Upon hearing one of the compositions, I wholeheartedly agreed. It sounded epic, like a superhero movie, and exciting like something that might have been heard in *Star Wars*. For me, this music made me excited and powerful – and I feel that these same emotions are conveyed to the audience as they watch these sections. For a sound that might often be associated with Batman or Han Solo saving the day, I appropriated it to represent women and our own epic tales. While we might not have to fight off General Zod, our own stories are both interesting and compelling. I used two of his pieces in the final version of my film.

The second graduate student was more of a classical artist, and I felt that she would have been a great fit for composing music that would go underneath the interviews and perhaps even my self-reflections. It would allow the viewer to focus more so on what I was attempting to say, and what images I was showing, rather than being distracted by music. Unfortunately, this composer was unable to provide any music early on in my editing process, and stopped responding to attempted communications. Less than a week before my thesis was due, I finally heard from this person. Luckily, I enjoyed the short piece that I was sent, and was able to edit it into my film. This was another example of expecting the unexpected: I had to mix together music at the very last minute to go underneath these portions that I had left unscored.
The third student was an undergraduate, and although he sent in a rough version of his work, I never received a final copy. Yet another example of having a contingency plan, as I had left a portion of the film unscored while waiting for his final version. Fortunately, I was able to use his draft version, with a few minor cuts, in my film. His sounded more like a video game soundtrack, and I hoped that it would add a whimsical tone to my film while it was playing. It was not distracting, so it was a nice piece to go under interviews. This music also helped with the shift in tone of my film from a critical feminist approach, to a more celebratory feminist film regarding my own journey towards geekdom.

One of my final versions of my documentary ended not with me, but with one of my interviewees. I realized that I did not have any great ending lines - nothing that moved me any which way. I kept coming back to a sound byte from Cara Nicole, a woman who cosplayed as Power Girl. Her profession was to cosplay as this character and travel across the country, visiting various conventions, and promoting the comic book. Perhaps it was because she was comfortable in front of the camera, but Ms. Nicole began to discuss what she saw as a growing trend in comic book creators and fans alike, and stated that women were beginning to take over. I decided to end my film on that empowering note, followed by a series of still photographs of women who were at the Denver Comic Convention - from volunteers to cosplayers to illustrators - mixed with female comic book characters. After attending the convention myself, I felt comfortable and confident in being myself, of being a fan of comics, and embracing my geeky nature. I wanted to impart this feeling to my audience at the end of my documentary, and I
believe that these images, along with uplifting music and the final sound byte, achieve this reaction.

However, my final version took on a different ending. After screening my film to my committee, it was decided that this ending note did not convey the emotions that I had hoped. Instead, it seemed that Ms. Nicole’s costume took away from both hers and my message. This was counter to my own focus of celebrating women by focusing too much on her body, making her and her character an object rather than a subject who had an important viewpoint to share. Therefore, I changed this portion of the film to include Ms. Nicole on the screen for a few seconds, and then cutting to the montage of female comic book characters and women who attended the convention. This allows the viewer to hear what Ms. Nicole is saying about women starting to take over the comic book culture, while illustrating what she is talking about – a much more powerful set.

Once this segment finishes, my film now continues one year later, and a montage occurs with a voice over narrated by myself. In this section, I discuss the completion of my own transformation, which occurred several weeks after comic con had concluded. While I am talking, images of a golden rope, silver bracelets, and earrings are seen – all parts of my costume – and me getting ready to wear it. Finally, I state that I am going as Wonder Woman to Denver Comic Con this year, and the image shown is of me dressed as the iconic character. This newer ending nicely ties up what I was unable to say or convey in my other cuts – that I have changed, am more confident, and really enjoy being part of this collective that is geek culture.
Chapter Five: Conclusions

I certainly feel that the movie I set out to make during my thesis proposal is not exactly the same film that I created. In the end, *Encounter at Comic Con* was more about my experience and change in opinion on comic culture. I do not believe that my final product is as critical as I had originally hoped, but it certainly outlines the personal journey that I had. I was able to grow as a person, and as a filmmaker, during this process. I learned quite a bit about how to make a movie on a limited budget, but I also learned about who I am as a person and what I value.

While my original proposal had a much more critical feminist approach – to go in-depth of how women and men are being portrayed (or not being portrayed) in mainstream culture – my final project has a less critical stance. My change in focus came from my own experiences at the convention, and also from the footage that I had been able to gather. The responses to many of the questions that I asked during interviews were not critical in one way or another. This made it difficult to create the film that I originally had intended on creating. I still feel that my film is a feminist movie though; one where women are portrayed as fans, though not in a stigmatizing or stereotypical
way. I believe that all of the women portrayed are strong, confident individuals, who can (as I originally proposed) serve as role models to my audience.

Since attending Denver Comic Convention 2012, I decided to attend StarFest 2013 and Denver Comic Convention 2013. I have already started to make my costume for StarFest - a *Star Trek: The Original Series* officer uniform. Furthermore, I've begun to purchase the fabric needed for my costume that I plan on wearing to the Denver Comic Convention. If you had asked me a year ago if I would have ever cosplayed, I would have given a resounding no. This experience has changed all of that. I realized that inside the convention halls people celebrated being a geek – it was cool to wear a costume. People treated cosplayers like a rock star. Unlike what one might expect from walking down the street in a costume – being heckled – inside the convention walls it felt safe and celebrated within the community.

Besides my own personal growth, I have also grown as a filmmaker. I now have a better understanding of what it means to make a film. Even though I had learned the basics of filmmaking from various classes, I had not created a film of this length before by almost completely by myself. I learned much about all aspects of filmmaking that I had not quite fully comprehended in the past.

My confidence in my own filmmaking has also greatly improved. Even though at times I felt like throwing in the towel, I stuck with the project. I now know that I can make a film from the pre-production phase to the finished product. As a female documentarian, I am continuing to find my own voice and develop my own style, and I am undaunted by the prospect of a future film project.
I still believe that the film I had originally proposed is still necessary – a critical look at the way in which the mainstream media portrays fans, juxtaposed with actual footage of a comic convention. It is important to bring to the attention of the masses the disparity between how men and women fans are depicted in popular society. My observations and the women I talked to were nothing like what I watched on television or in movies. While I am sure there are some who fit into that stereotype, the majority of the women I met were strong, independent, and confident. They were women who had all the qualities I aspired to have; they just had alternative interests (such as comic books). My own film does dispel some of these stereotypes, but does not give the viewer anything to compare the interviewees with (such as clips from *Comic Book Men* or *A Fan’s Hope*). I feel that this would be important to juxtapose one stereotype with a wider range of female representations because it would be more powerful for the audience to understand the prior limited images. While I know that the portrayals of women are skewed in both of these media, I do not recall examples of those limited representation when I was at the convention or when I met with other female fans. A reminder for the viewer in the form of clips from popular culture references would only make the disparity between real life and what mainstream society portrays real life as wider.

In hindsight, there are a few different things that I would have liked to have done differently. For example, I would have like to have interviewed more male attendees – to get their perspective on stereotypes of both male and female fans. I also would have stuck with my list of questions that I had written. On the first morning of interviews, I did ask questions from my list, but as the weekend went on I began to ask a few short questions
of each guest. If I had stuck with my original list my film might have had a more critical
stance, and would resemble my original proposal more closely. Additionally, I wish I had
had two film crews with me – one to interview guests, and the other to follow me around.
Since I only had one film crew, I had to balance the time we spent interviewing guests,
and the time that we spent following me around the convention. This was extremely
challenging, and if I had the chance to go back, I would have insisted on two crews. My
own transformation from the shy and uncomfortable fan to a confident young woman
who cannot wait to cosplay throughout this process would have been perhaps more
evident, and there would have been more footage of myself to include in my final
documentary.

Similarly, I believe that this is a weakness in my film – not having enough footage
of myself enjoying and experiencing the con. This footage could have only helped fully
illustrate my own journey and growth. I also believe that another weakness was not
talking to women illustrators or comic book creators. Learning about how they situate
themselves in a mostly man’s world, and what sort of challenges they face would, again,
have gotten me closer to my original proposal. My final version of my film did not
include their story, which I am sure would be an interesting one.

Even though I have some weaknesses, I also believe that my film has a few
strengths as well. For example, I feel that my transitions where stills from my film are
turned into a comic book page is both fun for the audience, and it piques their interest. It
gives my film a more lighthearted nature, while still being about females in comic book
culture. I also believe that the interviews that I do have are strong and powerful. I was
able to talk to women of all ages and body types, and include them in my film. I also
believe that the conclusion of my film – the montage of all the Wonder Woman items – is a great reveal, and a powerful way to illustrate my own transformation from being uncomfortable as a fan and as a young woman in regards to enjoying comics to fully embracing them.

While I didn't answer the question as to why there is a negative stigma attached to being a female fan, I hope that I proved that this reputation is wrong through the honest way that I portrayed both myself and the women that I interviewed. One thing that I do hope that my documentary accomplishes, and I strongly believe that it does, is to encourage my viewers to be comfortable with who they are. In my proposal, under intended audience, I state that I would hope that young women would view my film and be more comfortable with their own fandom. I think that I showed a variety of young women who were interviewed, and none of whom I think could be degraded or harshly judged. While some may be quirky, they are all excited to be at the convention. They all speak intelligently, and I think you can tell that they are confident and happy to be who they are.

I hope to make critical films about different subcultures in the future, such as what my original film had intended to be. While my finished project was critical of the way women might feel before being enveloped by the comic book and geek community (as is reflected by my own experiences), it was not as critical as I had intended. Parts of the original vision I had for this film can still be found in *Encounter at Comic Con*, though from perhaps my own perspective. For example, instead of hearing from interviewees what it was like when they first attended a convention, or what it was like
before they were comfortable in their own skin (if that was even the case), I refer to my own insecurities in my movie via my video diary.

Even though I am extremely proud of my project, I will always see it as a work in progress. There will always be something about it that I wish I could change, even if it something slight that no one else would notice. This entire process has allowed me to appreciate all aspects of filmmaking that I otherwise would not have been aware of. It has allowed me to understand my strengths and weaknesses, and to explore them more in-depth. I will continue to reflect upon this process and experience as I continue to establish myself as a filmmaker, and I hope that I am able to become a better professional because of it.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Azzarello, Brian, Goran Sudzuka, Tony Akins, Cliff Chiang and Dan Green. “Whom the Gods Would Destroy!” Wonder Woman #18 (May 2013), DC Comics.


Conway, Gerry, Don Heck, Frank McLaughlin, Ben Oda and Gene D’Angelo. “What’s Needed Here is a … Miracle at 22,300 Miles!” *Justice League of America* #188 (March 1981), DC Comics.


Jurgens, Dan, Art Thibert, Albert de Guzman and Glen Whitmore. “Taken to the Grave.” *The Adventures of Superman* #467 (June 1990), DC Comics.


*Marx, Christy, Romano Molenaar and Vincente Cifuentes*. “Mr. Freeze Demands Vengeance.” *Birds of Prey* #18 (May 2013), DC Comics.


“Sunday Comics.” *Fort Collins Coloradoan* (Fort Collins, CO), March 17, 2013.


APPENDIX A:  
Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCTION</th>
<th>Est. In Kind Contributions (DU &amp; Other)</th>
<th>Actual In Kind</th>
<th>Est. Out of Pocket Costs</th>
<th>Actual Out of Pocket</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director/Producer $500/day</td>
<td>10 days @ $500 = $5,000</td>
<td>5 days @ $500 = $2,500</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Assistant $150/day</td>
<td>10 days @ $150 = $1,500</td>
<td>3 days @ $150 = $450</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripting $150/day</td>
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<td>3 days @ $150 = $450</td>
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<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AF100 Camera $400/week</td>
<td>2 weeks* @ $400 = $800</td>
<td>5 days @ $58 = $290</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripod $25/day</td>
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<td>5 days @ $25 = $125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shotgun Mic Kit $150/day</td>
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<td>3 days @ $150 = $450</td>
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<td>$0</td>
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<td>Wireless Lav Kit $25/day</td>
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<td>5 days @ $50 = $250</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Production Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$11,850</td>
<td>$4,515</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| POST-PRODUCTION | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Final Cut Pro Editing Suite $75/hour | 80 hours @ $75 = $6,000 | N/A – used editing equipment at home | $0 | $0 |
| **Post Production Totals** | | $6,000 | $0 | $0 |

| OTHER EXPENSES | | |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Gas | $0 | $0 | $150 | $95 |
| Lodging (3 Nights at DCC) | $0 | $0 | $500 | $500 |
| Parking (at DCC) | $0 | $90 | 3 Days @ $30 = $90 | $0 |
| Food/Beverage | $100 | $125 | $100 | $150 |
| Miscellaneous | $100 | $0 | $750 | $80 |
| **Other Totals** | | $200 | $215 | $840 |
| Subtotal | $17,950 | $840 | | |
| Contingency (15%) | $2,692.50 | | | |
| **TOTAL COSTS** | | $4,730 | $825 | |
APPENDIX B: 
Personal Releases from Interviewees

PERSONAL RELEASE

I, ______________, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

Producer may use and authorize others to use all or parts of the Recordings. Producer, its successors and assigns shall own all right, title and interest, including copyright, in and to the Program, including the Recordings, to be used and disposed of without limitation as Producer shall in its sole discretion determine.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: 6-11-12

Print Name: TRISTAN STREAMER

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 1751 ROBURN ST DENVER, CO 80222

Phone Number: 303-895-0115

E-Mail Address (optional): collawannabe25@earthlink.net

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Alexandra Miller, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: ___________________________ Date: 6/16/2012

Print Name: Alexandra Miller

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 2278 S. Eldridge ct. 80230

Phone Number: 303-993-9427

E-Mail Address (optional): alex@smudgeandfrank.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Megan Lukes, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: Megan Lukes
Date: 4/16/12

Print Name: Megan Lukes

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 10130 Highland Meadow Circle
38-207

Phone Number: 720-255-7558

E-Mail Address (optional): 

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the "Program" and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the "Recordings"). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: Alexandra Fresch
Print Name: Alexandra Fresch
Date: 8/15/12

Parent's Signature (if minor):

Address: 912 South Elmira Street
Denver, CO 80207

Phone Number: (303)-782-9249

E-Mail Address (optional): alexandra.fresch@toast2.net

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the "Program")
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

Maria Zaleski, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: [Signature] Date: 6/16/12

Print Name: Maria Zaleski

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address:

Phone Number: 720-495-0469

E-Mail Address (optional): ringwraith03@hotmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

[Signature: [Signature], Date: 6/16/12]

Print Name: Rachel Kendrick

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 1931 11th Ave Apt 301 Greeley, CO 80631

Phone Number: 719 648 3148

E-Mail Address (optional):

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the "Program")
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

Lily J. Herrera Gomez, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice, and participation in and performance on film, tape, or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: Lily J. Herrera Gomez  Date: 06/16/12

Print Name: Lily J. Herrera Gomez

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 1931 11th Ave, Apt #301
          Greeley, CO 80631

Phone Number: 303/916-8076

E-Mail Address (optional): mrr-6157@ears.unco.edu

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, ___________________________________________________________________________, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: __________________________________________________________________________ Date: 6-16-12

Print Name: _______________________________________________________________________

Parent’s Signature (if minor): _______________________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________________________

Phone Number: __________________________________________________________________________

E-Mail Address (optional): _______________________________________________________________________

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)  
Producer: Carly Jerome  
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention  
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Niles Thackery, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: Niles Thackery Date: 6-16-12

Print Name: Niles Thackery

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: PO Box 12, Palmer Lake, CO

Phone Number: N/A

E-Mail Address (optional): buttermuffin_kitty@yahoo.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, ____________________________, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

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Signature: ____________________________ Date: 6/16/12
Print Name: ____________________________
Parent’s Signature (if minor): ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
Phone Number: ____________________________
E-Mail Address (optional): ____________________________

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, William Johnston, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: [Signature] Date: 6/16/12

Print Name: William Johnston

Parent’s Signature (if minor): 

Address: 7643 Windford

Phone Number: 303-841-7132

E-Mail Address (optional): 

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, ________________________, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: ___________________________ Date: 6/16/12

Print Name: __________________________

Parent’s Signature (if minor): __________________________

Address: 1522 Gilpin
Denver, CO 80218

Phone Number: 303 906-9602

E-Mail Address (optional): __________________________

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

Thomas Faverty have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: ___________________________ Date: 6/16/12

Print Name: Thomas Faverty

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 459 Wright St., Apt. #107
          Lakewood, CO 80228

Phone Number: 303-472-7479

E-Mail Address (optional): tfaverty@umcd.edu

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, [Name], have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: [Signature] Date: 6/14/10

Print Name: [Print Name]

Parent's Signature (if minor): [Signature]

Address: 457 Wright St Lakewood CO 80228

Phone Number: [Phone Number]

E-Mail Address (optional): [Email Address]

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the "Program")
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, [Joseph Wiseleger], have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the "Program" and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the "Recordings"). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: [Signature] Date: 6/16/12

Print Name: Joseph Wiseleger

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 459 Wright St #107
Lakewood, CO 80228

Phone Number: 303-332-4156

E-Mail Address (optional): joseph.wiseleger@gmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the "Program")
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Conner W Rust, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: Conner W Rust Date: 6/16/12

Print Name: Conner W Rust

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 9923 W Hawaii Dr.

Phone Number: 303 985-8206

E-Mail Address (optional): 

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, __________________________________________, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

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Signature: ____________________________ Date: 6/1/12

Print Name: ___________________________

Parent’s Signature (if minor): ____________________________

Address: ______________________________________

______________________________________________

Phone Number: __________________________________

E-Mail Address (optional): _________________________

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, [Name], have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

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Signature: ___________________________ Date: 6-17-12
Print Name: ___________________________

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 3138 E 113th Ave Thornton CO 80229

Phone Number: 720-839-0056

E-Mail Address (optional): drak322z@gmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

__________________________________________, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

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Signature: __________________________________ Date: 6-17-12

Print Name: ________________________________

Parent’s Signature (if minor): ________________________

Address: ____ S. Rush Rd Rush Co. 80837

Phone Number: 719-478-2843

E-Mail Address (optional): Jedi_princess@yahoo.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, [Name], have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the "Program" and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the "Recordings"). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

Producer may use and authorize others to use all or parts of the Recordings. Producer, its successors and assigns shall own all right, title and interest, including copyright, in and to the Program, including the Recordings, to be used and disposed of without limitation as Producer shall in its sole discretion determine.

Signature: __________________________  Date: 0/1/12

Print Name: [Name]

Parent’s Signature (if minor): __________________________

Address: __________________________

Phone Number: __________________________

E-Mail Address (optional): __________________________

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the "Program")
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

[Signature: Sara Guatadra] have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: Sara Guatadra

Print Name: Sara Guatadra

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 12970 W. Maple P1, Apt 10305, Lakewood, CO 80228

Phone Number: 1234567890

E-Mail Address (optional): luvout@gmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary

Black Canary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Glen Konvalin, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: [Signature] Date: 17 June 2012
Print Name: Glen Konvalin

Parent’s Signature (If minor):

Address: 601 4th W Baseline Rd.
Lafayette CO 80026

Phone Number: 303-270-4118

E-Mail Address (optional): Walker36310@gmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Audrey Konvalin, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: Audrey Konvalin
Print Name: Audrey Konvalin
Date: 6/17/12
Parent’s Signature (if minor): [Signature]
Address: 5550 E. Vasco Ave., Denver CO, 80222
Phone Number: 720-212-3675
E-Mail Address (optional): iris@ochimaq@hotmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

This PERSONAL RELEASE (the "Program") and they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the "Program" and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the "Recordings"). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: [Signature]
Print Name: Jenna Tesmer
Parent's Signature (if minor): [Signature]
Address: 530 S Ivy St Denver CO 80222
Phone Number: (303)779-8641
E-Mail Address (optional): jay@bee5683.com intent.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the "Program")
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

[Signature: Kayla Stephenson] Date: June 17, 2012

Print Name: Kayla Stephenson

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address:

Phone Number:

E-Mail Address (optional): Kaysteph10@gmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

Jared DeHake have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: ___________________ Date: 6-17-12

Print Name: Jared DeHake

Parent’s Signature (if minor): ___________________

Address: ______________________

Phone Number: ______________________

E-Mail Address (optional): jacktsi2@yahoo.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Jordan Coulter, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: [Signature] Date: 6/17/12

Print Name: Jordan Coulter

Parent’s Signature (if minor): [Signature]

Address: [Address]

Phone Number: [Phone Number]

E-Mail Address (optional): jbcoulter@yahoo.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, ____________________________, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: ____________________________ Date: 06/17/12

Print Name: ____________________________

Parent’s Signature (if minor): ____________________________

Address: ____________________________

Phone Number: 720-882-6937

E-Mail Address (optional): kikik.xygirl@gmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

[Signature]

Print Name: [Signature]

Parent’s Signature (if minor): [Signature]

Address: 

Phone Number: 

E-Mail Address (optional): 

dragon@simmons27@yahoo.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Myrna Mayer, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: _______________________________ Date: June 17, 2012

Print Name: Myrna Mayer

Parent’s Signature (if minor): _______________________________

Address: ________________________________________________

Phone Number: ____________________________________________

E-Mail Address (optional): kitty.wu@gmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Stephanie Mendez ____________________________, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the "Program" and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the "Recordings"). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: ________________________________ Date: 6-17-12

Print Name: ________________________________

Parent’s Signature (if minor): ________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________

Phone Number: 719-324-3689

E-Mail Address (optional): KJBAwolfgirl5@gmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the "Program")
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

Andrew Peoples, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: Andrew Peoples

Date: 6/17/12

Print Name: Andrew Peoples

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 8481 S W i n e r o c k St

Phone Number: 720-382-8301

E-Mail Address (optional): onyxfire@hotmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Chadwick Breitmaier, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: _______________________________ Date: 6/17/2012

Print Name: Chadwick Breitmaier

Parent’s Signature (if minor): _______________________________

Address: ______________________________________________

Phone Number: __________________________________________

E-Mail Address (optional): cwrk1978@yahoo.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Guillaume Agente, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: __________________________ Date: 6/17/2012

Print Name: Guillaume Agente

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 657 S Parker Rd Apt 2-8 Denver, CO 80221

Phone Number:

E-Mail Address (optional): __________________________

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, ________ Chaillé, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: [Signature] Date: 6-17-12

Print Name: [Print Name]

Parent’s Signature (if minor): ___________________________________________________________________________

Address: _______________________________________________________________________________________

Phone Number: __________________________

E-Mail Address (optional): _______________________________________________________________________

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con  (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Mercedes Goyert, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: ___________________________ Date: 6/17/12

Print Name: Mercedes Goyert

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 3401 E. 12th St Cheyenne, WY 82001

Phone Number: 307-634-0476

E-Mail Address (optional):

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

Seth Dela Torre, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: Seth Dela Torre Date: 6/17/12
Print Name: Seth Dela Torre

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 5609 Canyon Rd. Denver CO 80214

Phone Number: (303) 630-2505

E-Mail Address (optional): nurseguard18@gmail.com

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
PERSONAL RELEASE

I, Oliver Brained, have agreed to be photographed and/or recorded by Carly Jerome (PRODUCER) and that they and their successors shall own all rights of every kind in said photography and/or recording.

I hereby authorize Producer to record and edit into the “Program” and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film, tape or otherwise for use in the above Program or parts thereof (the “Recordings”). I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

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Signature: [Signature]
Print Name: Oliver Brained
Date: 6/18/2012

Parent’s Signature (if minor):

Address: 1824 S Logan Street
Denver, CO 80210

Phone Number: 720 252 5996

E-Mail Address (optional): idon'tr Omisbehav e57@yahoocom

Film Title (working title): Encounter at Comic Con (the “Program”)
Producer: Carly Jerome
Production Location: 2012 Denver Comic Convention
Film Type: Student Documentary
Please be aware that by entering this area, you consent to your voice and/or likeness being used, without compensation, for the production of a student documentary tentatively entitled Encounter at Comic Con. Your entry constitutes your consent to such photography, filming and/or recording and to any use, in any and all media throughout the universe in perpetuity, of your appearance, voice and name for any purpose whatsoever in connection with the production.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION