It's a bright and sunny day as I get off the plane at LAX and head for my rental car. I'm gearing up for the drive to the Burbank Airport Marriott, where this year's Monsterpalooza convention is being held April 9-11.

After checking into my room, I enter the main dealer exhibition area where vendors are still setting up and gaze at the masks and horror related merchandise for sale. When the doors open at 6:00 p.m., the crowd of people who are waiting rush in to convention area and I take this time to check out the museum. I stare in amazement at the life-size models of creatures past and present, works from Amalgamated Dynamics, KNB EFX—it's just beautiful. I must've stayed in the museum for hours because when I did finally come out, it was about 8:45 p.m.

The show's now up and running as I turn around and come face to face with WOLFMAN's Rick Baker, attending with his two daughters. I ask if he could sign my copy of MAKING A MONSTER, a book he was featured in from the early '80s. When Baker said "Sure," I rush back to the car and grab it in what seems like 15 seconds!

As Baker heads off, I spot LOST/STAR TREK's J.J. Abrams, THE HOWLING's Joe Dante and just as I'm leaving for the evening, HELLBOY helmer Guillermo del Toro is strolling outside. And that's just the first day!

Day 2

I arrive outside the convention area very early only to see that the line's been forming for a while, nor does it stop until about 2:45 p.m. Unlike Friday, the dealer's room is packed wall to wall, making it very hard to move. With so many people, I get away from the chaos and take in one of the seminars. Baker is back for his second day in a row, and Howard Berger from KNB is next on stage. Berger talks about 20 years of being in the business and his upcoming TV series, THE WALKING DEAD. Unfortunately, he could not say anything about the new PREDATORS movie (we don't know what a Predator looks like by now?!).

I finally get dressed up as my own creation, the Walking Monster (time to go to work!) and have some fun with the convention goers, some of whom know me from the FANGORIA Weekend of Horrors shows.

After about two hours in my garish getup, the heat is too much for me and I get out of costume (my second skin really). The RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD panel is ending and walking by is none other than the Tar Man. The live band plays 'til about midnight, and I crash hard in my room.

Day 3

I check out of my suite and pack all my luggage in the car. I only have about 10 hours before I'm heading back to New York City. It's very relaxed today. Some vendors don't come in until the afternoon to set back up. I take the time to see the panel on Barney Burman, who just won the Academy Award for Best Makeup (for STAR TREK), and the Cinema Makeup School's Theater of Blood demo. With only two hours left of the show, I get back into the costume—still wet and sweaty on the inside from yesterday—and have a little more fun.

I go back to the museum for one last time as they are starting to take the displays down.

It seems like the show was over in just a few hours, and saying goodbye to the fans and artists was very hard knowing it will be a full year before I will see some of them again. I linger until the event is fully shut down and the last box is packed, then head off to LAX for my overnight return flight to the Big Apple. Hello red eye; so long monsters!

{jcomments on}