Written by Walter Bonner
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Geeks unite, for your tale has now been told! COMIC-CON EPISODE IV: A FAN’S HOPE, the latest opus from documentarian extraordinaire Morgan Spurlock (SUPER SIZE ME), warps into select theaters (as well as VOD) today from Wrekin Hill Entertainment and NECA Films. The story of five Con-goers from different parts of the country, it’s hilarious, sometimes touching, and occasionally sad, but always entertaining. Spurlock tells FANGORIA that the project came together with the help of a certain true believer.

“The whole idea for the film came in 2009,” he says. “I got hired by Fox to do THE SIMPSONS 20TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL for them, and I’d been wanting to go to Comic-Con for years, but had never been able to. So as soon as we got the SIMPSONS special, I was like, ‘We’re goin’ to Comic-Con! We’re gonna go there and find SIMPSONS superfans.’ We went and had this kind of AMERICAN IDOL-style casting with us on one side, and SIMPSONS devotees would come in and just wax rhapsodic, spouting their love for all things Homer. While we were there, I was like, ‘This place is like a movie in and of itself.’ The people were so passionate—they were these amazing characters.

"Later on that night," he continues, "I was at a party where I met Stan Lee [pictured above], and I went over to kiss the ring, as you do when you are in my generation, growing up reading his comic books. I said, 'Mr. Lee, I just wanted to introduce myself. You changed my life as a kid. Reading your comics really inspired and motivated me and made me want to tell my own stories.' And he's like [*in Stan Lee voice*], 'Morgan, thank you! It's great to meet you! We should make a movie together! We should make a documentary about Comic-Con!' And I was like, 'Yes, we should, Mr. Lee. I couldn't agree more.' Cut to literally a year later, we were there making the movie with Stan Lee, Joss Whedon, Thomas Tull, Harry Knowles…I mean, it was amazing."

The people the documentary follows—wannabe artists, a costume designer, a toy collector, a fanboy planning to propose to his girlfriend at the event and the owner of the world's biggest comic-book store—were discovered through the Internet and video submissions. "We put out this massive casting call," Spurlock explains. "We posted it on fan sites, we e-mailed comic-book shops throughout the country and they put it up on their bulletin boards, Harry Knowles blasted it out through Ain't It Cool News, and we had about 2,000 people submit to be in the film. People from all around the world sent in e-mails, and if we liked their story, we asked them to send in videos to see what they looked like, and as they were telling their stories we could hear their passion.

"But the thing with the submissions was, we weren't gonna fly you there; you already had to be going. There were plenty of people who were like, 'Oh, put me in the movie, I don't have a ticket!' And it was like, 'Well, we're not gonna pay for your ticket.' We got a lot of people who were like, 'I wanna go to Comic-Con and meet Stan Lee. So you should follow me.' " Spurlock rolls his eyes. "That whittled the list down quite a bit.

"One of the first people we cast was Holly Conrad [pictured below]," he continues. "She sent us this video; here she was, making costumes in her garage that were insane. The girl's so talented. I sent the tape to Joss, Harry, Thomas and Stan and said, 'I think she should be our first character; she represents everything that the film should be about.' And they were like, 'Absolutely.' So we cast her first. And then we got tapes from Skip Harvey, from Eric Henson, James Darling—the guy who was gonna propose to his girlfriend—Anthony Calderon, the collector based in California… We had great people."

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