

BEIJING COMIC CON: A NOOB HOPE

Set phasers to fun! Planet earth's most righteous pop culture fest makes its Beijing debut this month. **Frank Sweet** dusts off his pocket protector and gets stuck in

History is charted by the events that nudge it off course. The Ice Age. Bread. Sliced bread. *Cats*. Beijing Comic Convention (BJCC) might not seem like the type of event upon which the fate of mankind pivots – and that's because it's not. It's a two-day celebration of pop culture and comic book artists, featuring one of China's largest collection of comic books, cosplay competitions, celebrity guests and gaming.

It will end and we'll all continue our slow waltz toward the grave, lugging a few more comics on the way. But to the community it serves, the dawn of the first annual BJCC represents something seismic: membership to a worldwide community of like-minded people who unite under the motto 'Be nice, be cool and respect each other'. Right on. The convention itself might not recalibrate space and time, but for many people and by many measurements, Beijing's first Comic Convention will be bigger than *Ben Hurr*.

Our story takes place during the Dragon Boat Festival (Thu 9-Fri 10), at Shunyi's New China International Exhibition Center. For con highlights and exclusive interviews with the cosplayers, read on, young padawan.



Stay tuned! Clockwise from main: Jim Lee's Superman; professional cosplayer Yaya Han; BJCC cosplay finalists; *GoT*'s Iron Throne

Five unmissable events at Comic Con

Get your own personalised drawing from a DC Comics artist – for free!

Korean-American penciller Jim Lee, whose drawings you may have clocked in *X-Men*, *Justice League*, *Superman* and *Batman* comics, will be sketching fan-favourite superheroes, all before your very eyes and at your respectful request. And we stress respectful – apparently fans turned pretty rabid in Shanghai last year. Cool one, Shanghai. Now with DC Comics, Lee rose to fame at Marvel where he co-created *X-Men* badass Gambit, not to mention drew and plotted the best-selling comic book of all time in *X-Men Vol 2 No 1*. Celebrated for his 'armoured, implacable and elusive' interpretation of Batman, Lee is one of the most influential living forces in the game.

Wax heroic with Hollywood stars

Celebrity guests typically command the hype at Comic Con, and the capital's inaugural bash is no different, with star power arriving from far and wide, including planet Krypton and Middle Kingdom and Earth. Brandon Routh (who you'll remember from such *Supermans* as the Kevin Spacey one) headlines, with Ming Na Wen (aka the voice of *Mulan* and Agent May of

Agent S.H.I.E.L.D) and Dean O'Gorman (or Fili, principal dwarf in the *The Hobbit* series) support. Spend their precious time and your precious savings posing for photos together, sniffing *Mulan*'s soft hair, plucking one out for the ball – whatever. It is going to cost you a bit, but you do get to make the bird-plane gag right in his mild-mannered face.

“**Sniff *Mulan*'s hair, pluck one out for the ball**”

Sit on the Iron Throne

Celebrities, comics – both terrific reasons to attend Comic Con. But imagine for just a



The geek shall inherit the earth

A big part of Comic Con around the world is the cosplay competition. *Time Out* catches up with three of the finalists at this year's showdown

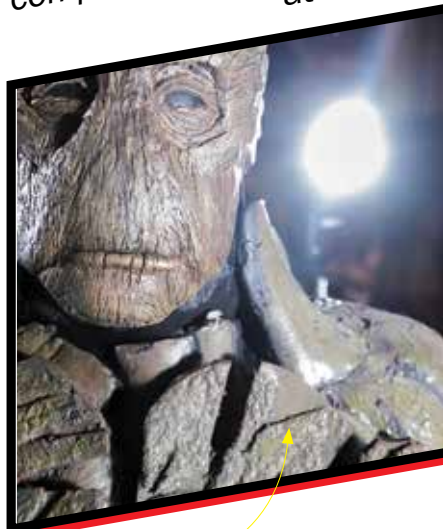
second the feeling of sitting upon the throne from *Game of Thrones*. The affirmation! The selfie! That's right, a 1:1 replica of Winterfell's hotseat is coming to the con, all the better for casting shade on the peasants who queue before your majesty.

Check out the national cosplay competition

The baddest cosers (cosplayers) in the Mainland hit the stage in a competition that will see the winner head to the world finals in Chicago, with the Beijing leg to be judged by three professional cosplay guests Carlos Blanchard, Yaya Han and Ani-mia. What's a cosplay? Why, it's the art of inhabiting your favourite pop culture character, physically and mentally, in an elaborate costume designed and fashioned by the the player. You can literally take on any character you want – a vengeful Sith Lord, My Little Pony – but importantly, outsourcing the labour is straight-up foul play. We caught up with three of this year's cosplay competition finalists – cast your beady ones to the right for a taste of what's to come.

Play video games till you drop

Fancy yourself a n00b slayer? Capcom, makers of *Street Fighter*, are hosting a competition at the convention with the latest game, *Street Fighter V*. Attendees will also have access to a massive range of new indie games from various local and foreign creators.



Name Yinzi.
Character Groot, *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

When you're in costume, do you transform into the character mentally?

I do. When you are cosplaying, you want to bring out the personality of the character.

What's the cosplay scene like in China?

Cosplay has become more commercialised here. I think it's good: people should take it more seriously.

Why is cosplay important?

It's important because I love it. It can make dreams come true.

Name A Shui.
Character Batman.

Cosplay huh? How come?

What I love about cosplay is that it can make the impossible possible – I can be the hero in real life.

What's the plan for the final? Do you have a strategy?

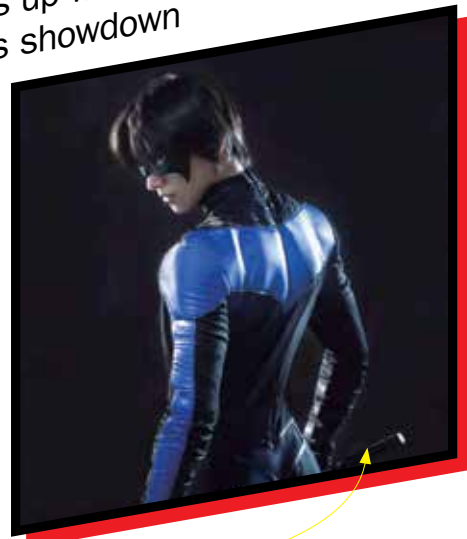
I will update my costume and bring myself closer to the role. You will see my performance then. I'm keeping strategy a secret.

Tell us about your costume.

I chose Batman because of my stature. The costume's big.

Why is cosplay important?

This is the only way for anime culture to live in harmony with the real life. It's a happy Garden of Eden that liberates us from the usual restrictions.



Name Shi Wei.
Character Cell, *Dragon Ball* (pictured as DC's Nightwing).

So why cosplay?

What appeals to me is letting the characters I like move in the ways I want. In this way, I blend the characters I like with the feelings I want to express.

Do you have a specific style? Do cosplay artists stick to a specific character?

The characters I cover are mainly from European or American cartoons, film, television and games. Sometimes I choose other characters I like very much, such as Cell from *Dragon Ball Z*, which I will present in this BJCC Championship.

Cosers have special features or costumes to different extents. Some talented cosers are able to present different characters, but their distinctive styles remain.

What challenges face cosers in China today?

Today, cosplay has evolved to a higher level. To a certain extent, films are also a form of cosplay, so there's no limit on what you can do, which is a challenge. One character, if presented by 100 cosers, will cause a hundred different feelings. Diversity is what we want.

I think perhaps the key challenge for cosplay is to integrate your own thinking and feelings and present what you like.

Beijing Comic Con New China International Exhibition Center. 9am-5.30pm. Thu 9-Fri 10. 180RMB per day; 900-1,900RMB two-day VIP pass; free for children under 12. Go to timeoutbeijing.com for more con coverage.

