



'The Amazing Spider-Man 2' swings into theaters tonight. Free Comic Book Day draws fans on Saturday.

COMICS KA-POW!



Arizona Daily Star

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COMIC BOOK GIVEAWAY

Area shops participate in national event Saturday with freebies, activities

By Anthony Victor Reyes

SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

In 1980, 7-year-old **Matt Sams** stood in Tucson's Fantasy Comics store and twirled a spinrack of comics. When it stopped, he picked up the first comic book he saw, an issue of Marvel Comics' "Captain America." He browsed through the thin, single-issue comic book and fell in love.

He loved the stories. He loved the art. He loved the action. He loved the reading.

When he was 12, Sams looked the owner, **Thomas Struck**, in the eye and announced he would one day own Fantasy Comics. Last year, after working at the store for eight years, Sams became the owner when Struck retired.

And he's ready to inspire other children the way he once was. Sams and many of Tucson's other comic book store owners think Saturday's Free Comic Book Day is a chance to do just that.

"Realistically there is not supposed to be anything for adults in there," says Sams. "The day is to generate interest for kids."

This nationwide event, which happens every first Saturday of May, is when store owners hand out free comic books, building readers and future comic book lovers around the country.

"We just want kids to read," says Sams. "They are our future, literally. So if they're reading stuff and getting interested in stuff, that is beneficial for all of us. A lot of them do not see comics until this day."

Showtime Cards' **Diego Rivera** echoes Sams.



DAVID SANDERS / ARIZONA DAILY STAR 2010

Area comic book stores, such as Heroes & Villians, are preparing for Free Comic Book Day Saturday.

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SATURDAY IS FREE COMIC BOOK DAY

Charlie's Comics, 5460 E. Speedway, 320-0279

- Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- The day is packed with raffles for comic-inspired items, an auction for a drawing by a comic book artist, and comic book sketching by artists John Chihak, Gene Hall, Ernesto and Beatriz Romero, Jenn Cerrella, Jacob Beckenrider, Ryan Huna Smith, Juan Heinrich, Mike Esham, Dassie Cruz and Santino Castaneda. Free comics are limited to four per person.

Fantasy Comics, 2595 N. First Ave., 670-0100

- Hours: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Jolyon Yates of "Lego Ninjago" and Zach Howard of "The Cape" will come into town and sketch in the store. Joining them — and also sketching — will be Tucson-based comic book artists Tim Champion and Eric Schock. Free comics are limited to one of each comic book per person.

Heroes and Villains, 4533 E. Broadway, 321-4376

- Hours: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Hang with your superheroes, courtesy of costumed members of The Justice League of Arizona, The Arizona Avengers, the 501st Legion, Star Trek and My Little Pony Club: United Bromide of Tucson. There also will be children's crafts, Spider-Man coloring contest and a comic-themed photo booth. Limit of one comic of each per person.

R-Galaxy, 2406 N. Campbell Ave., 322-0422

- Hours: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Test your knowledge with trivia contests; score cool comic stuff at the spontaneous auctions, and meet local comic book creators. Anyone who comes in full anime or comic book costume will receive 35 percent off any toy. Free comics are limited to six per person.

Showtime Cards, 5801 E. Speedway, 296-5512

- Hours: Event is 3-7 p.m.; store opens at 10 a.m.
- The day is loaded with events such as performances by local band Side Effect (in super hero costumes); giveaways; raffles; the Justice League of Arizona and the Rebel Legion groups in costumes, and comic book sketches by local artists, Eric Schock, Santino Castaneda and Tim Champion. Free comics are limited to five titles per person.

BY THE NUMBERS**1933**

The year the format was introduced with "Famous Funnies."

\$700 million+

Estimated sales of comic books in North America in 2012.

2007

Year comic books hit the online market with the launch of Marvel Digital Comics.

\$3.61

The average cost of a comic book in 2013.

10

Cost, in cents, of a comic book in the 1930s.

200+

Number of films based on comic books released since "Adventures of Captain Marvel," a 12-part serial from Republic Pictures, which debuted in 1941.

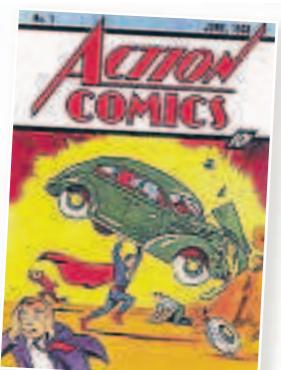
623 million

Number of dollars the 2012 movie "The Avengers" grossed in 2012, setting a record for a film based on a comic book. "Iron Man 3," released last year, is next at \$409 million.

\$11.40

Average cost of a graphic novel, which has a full story; comic books generally have stories ending in cliffhangers.

Sources: Marvel.com, DC Comics and various websites

**COLLECTORS' PRICES****Action Comics, No. 1**

• Price when published in 1938: 10 cents.

• Estimated value today: \$2.89 million.

• Why valuable: Superman made his first appearance.

*Continued from previous page***Detective Comics, No. 27**

• Price when published in 1939: 10 cents.

• Estimated value today: \$2.23 million.

• Why: This story introduced the world-renowned crusading detective, Batman.

Marvel Comics, No. 1

• Price when published in 1939: 10 cents.

• Estimated value today: \$572,000.

• Why: This was the first Marvel Comics comic book. It also introduced the Human Torch, the Angel and the Sub-Mariner.

Amazing Fantasy, No. 15

• Price when published in 1962: 72 cents

• Estimated value today: \$447,000 (a copy in mint condition sold for \$1.1 million in 2011).

• Why: This was the story that introduced Spider-Man.

**"The Strain", No. 1**

• Price when published in 2011: \$1

• Estimated value today: \$899.99 according to online auction site eBay.

• Why: Guillermo del Toro, known for his films "Pacific Rim" and "Pan's Labyrinth," and Chuck Hogan, who wrote the "Prince of Thieves", wrote this comic book. The copy at this price is signed by del Toro. The estimated value of an unsigned copy is \$193.

Source: Nostomania, an online comic book price guide, unless otherwise noted.

Test your comic book knowledge at starnet.com/comicquiz*Continued on next page*

35 YEARS LATER HE OWNS HEROES AND VILLAINS
COMIC BOOK STORE, BUT NOW PRETENDS TO BE BATMAN

FREE COMICS

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"We are hoping it encourages people to read, kids especially," he says.

With the rise in popularity of superheroes in television and films, comic book shop owners say there is no better way to ignite a passion for reading than by introducing characters and plots that the children already know and love.

"Most of them know Batman, Superman, Spider-Man and all of that, but when they get the first (comics) of their own, it is like 'Ooh, oh my God that is so cool,'" Rivera says. "That's a big deal for them and generally that happens for them on Free Comic Book Day."

The majority of comic books given away on this day are aimed at younger audiences; among those likely seen in the for-free pile are publications such as Nickelodeon's "Avatar: The Last Airbender"; "Hello Kitty: Surprise"; "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers"; and "SpongeBob Freestyle Funnies."

Most of the stores are planning family activities for the day, which include music, costume contests and arts and crafts.

"The crafts are definitely so much fun," says Heroes and Villains' **Cynthia Gerriets**. She plans to help kids make comic book-inspired crafts. "We want to make everything fun for the kids — keeping that excited magic (and) love for comics alive for them. I wish I had that when I was

COMIC BOOK DAY TIPS

- Lines tend to build before the store opens so come early to guarantee you receive the titles you want.
- Come dressed up as your favorite superhero. It's always great to show your passion.
- Families — not just the kids — are encouraged to participate.
- Stay hydrated.
- Visit as many stores as possible to get a feel of what this day is all about.

MOVIES BASED ON COMIC BOOKS TO BE RELEASED THIS YEAR

- "The Amazing Spider-Man 2" (Tonight)
- "X-Men: Days of Future Past" (May 23)
- "Guardians of the Galaxy" (Aug. 1)
- "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" (Aug. 8)
- "Sin City: A Dame to Kill For" (Aug. 22)
- "Big Hero 6" (November)

younger."

Charlie Harris, a literacy advocate and owner of Charlie's Comics, believes comic books can offer more than a good read; they can provide a moral compass.

"I really like Superman because his morals never faulted," says Harris. "He never accidentally killed someone. He never accidentally let someone die. He was always true to his morals, even if

it compromised his personal life situation."

Comic books have addressed topical issues since they were created in the 1930s. It isn't unusual for them to touch on such topics as war, terrorism, racism, immigration and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) rights. Many comic book shop owners believe that comics give readers a perspective that is simple and focused on basic human rights.

"(Superheroes) do what we all want to do if we had their resources," says **Michael Camp**, who owns Heroes and Villains. "They remind us of the simple things that are important. Like justice in 'Batman' or the power of friendship in 'My Little Pony.' They remind us of the important things within all the clutter of the real world."

In the end, Camp and his fellow comic book advocates believe comic books can teach Tucson youth that good can triumph over evil while engaging them in a form of literature that is not necessarily on a LED screen.

"We always talk about the moment someone walks through the door, that whatever happens in the world stays out there because in our world, the good guys will win and the bad guys will lose," says Camp.

"It is a moment of magic that is needed in our culture and society. It is a moment of community. It is a moment of friendship that you can share with people."

Anthony Victor Reyes is a University of Arizona journalism student apprenticing at the Star. Contact him at 573-4128.



KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR 2013

Charlie Harris organizes books at Charlie's Comic Books, one of the Tucson shops participating in Free Comic Book Day.

THOUGHTS ON COMIC BOOKS

HARRISON SCHONBRUN

15, Empire High School freshman.

Everyone loves a hero: "Little kids dream of being superheroes. ... I would say they have a stronger appeal to geeks, but superheroes are a major part of popular culture."

What a good comic book can do: "It should let them feel like a kid again. It should be a work of art, something to be covered."

MATT SAMS

41, owner of Fantasy Comics.

The Old Pueblo: "Tucson always has been a comic-book town."

Movie jump: "Now that it is more popular to watch 'Ironman' on the big screen, it is easier to go into a comic-book store because the taboo is gone."

GENE HALL

52, Tucson comic-book creator.

On the appeal of paper:

"A lot of people want that hard copy to read or collect. They want a tangible thing. I don't see that (digital) ever replacing the comic book itself."

Tucson's comic artist scene: "Right now, it is a very fertile, active time for creators in this town. I feel that there are more local creators than any other time in Tucson."

The sky's the limit: "A lot of

the local people have gone off to do bigger things. I think getting support from the local shops really helped that."

JON PROUDSTAR

47, writer and creator of Tribal Force, the first all-Native American superhero team.

On the move to online: "It is scary, because everything is technology-based and we are in a shift. We are finding our place

We are in the wild, wild West."

CYNTHIA GERRIETS

24, Heroes and Villains employee.

On the popularity of comic books: "The nerds have won."

A sign of changing times: "I live in a world where my mom knows who Hawkeye is."

CHARLIE HARRIS

60, owner of Charlie's Comics.

On a growing online fan base:

"They may read all their comics digitally, but when it is someone's birthday, they say 'Yeah, I just read this really good Batman comic and I want to give it to my buddy for his birthday. I'm not going to email it to him in a PDF, I am going to go to the comic shop and get him a graphic novel for \$20.'"

The appeal of comics: "I think people come into comic-book stores because comic books are cool."