

Calendar

No Buffy Rah-Rah

Slayer Symposium

How does the San Diego fan base for TV's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* compare to those in other locales around the country and the world? In size? In intensity? In ability to ace *Buffy* trivia tests? We'll know after this weekend, because what's being billed as the First Annual BuffyFest San Diego is being held here all day on Saturday.

Convention co-organizer Heather King said by phone from her home in L.A. last week, "We're capping ticket sales at 800. We haven't sold out yet, but we anticipate doing so on the morning of the event." Ashley McGuire ZeMans, King's local counterpart, who lives in the Mission Bay area, said the same thing, adding, "We aren't releasing our current numbers, but the number of hits we're getting on our website is staggering. It's

roughly 2500 unique hits a day."

King and ZeMans cofounded

Strong Women Enterprises just a few months ago in order to create BuffyFest San Diego. Their aim is to raise money for seven women's charities, including the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and San Diego's Sanctuary, a safe house for battered, abused, and stalked women. Certainly Buffy is no victim. With her supernatural fighting ability, high intelligence, and cool demeanor, she is the right role model for women "in need of finding new strength," says the Strong Women Enterprises promotional material.

They may be right. Buffy Summers chose to accept the call to eradicate evil in Sunnydale, California, when she might otherwise have been just another Cher Horowitz capitalizing on her blonde good looks and nice wardrobe.

For seven seasons, Sarah Michelle Gellar starred as Buffy. Now Gellar has moved on and the show is in reruns. But the fans are unstoppable, apparently. Buffy conventions are held around the country, in Europe, and Australia. "Australia has a huge, huge *Buffy* fandom," said ZeMans, who was scheduled to speak to a radio reporter phoning in from Ireland when this interview was over.

The Buffy-fan demographic in the U.S., as elsewhere, is predictable, isn't it? King was asked. After all, Gellar won a top prize for her role in *Buffy* at the 2003 Teen Choice Awards in L.A. last August. "But we've gotten a much broader age range," King said. "We're attracting high school and college students, professionals, both men and women, and a lot of folks our age." King is 29;



Sarah Michelle Gellar

ZeMans, 32.

ZeMans, who has a theater background, has signed up the roster of actors and people from the creative side of *Buffy* and its spin-off, *Angel*, who will be there on Saturday. Two casting directors for *Buffy* will answer questions about breaking into the industry. Kelly Donovan, the twin brother of and stunt double for Nicholas Brendon — Xander, the show's male leader — will demonstrate stage-fighting techniques and teach them to willing conventioners. James Contner, director for both *Buffy* and *Angel*, will speak and sign autographs.

King, whose experience is in organizing political campaigns, has put together panel discussions. "Join us in exploring issues of Violence and Morality in the BuffyVerse," reads one description. "Buffy has been shown to have a strong moral compass when it comes to the appropriate times to use violence. Have the Sunnydale rules of engagement

consistently made sense, though? How have the characters' beliefs towards violence evolved over the years? What has pushed them to cross their own moral lines, and were they able to return?"

ZeMans said, "We do not want this to be a rah-rah Buffy convention. That's not what it is. It's a true exploration into the BuffyVerse. So we have people from all different points of view participating in the panels. We don't want it to be antagonistic, but we do want to create a debate."

Academics and writers from L.A., New York, and Washington state as well as San Diego's Jeff Mariotte will participate in these discussions. "Jeff has written more *Buffy* and *Angel* books than any other writer," said ZeMans of Mariotte, who also owns Mysterious Galaxy, the independent bookstore specializing in mystery, science fiction, fantasy, and horror, on Clairemont Mesa Boulevard.

Has Gellar herself ever attended a

Buffy convention? "I have not heard of her attending one," said King. "And now she's quite busy with her movie career."

"And it's funny," said ZeMans, "because not a single person [planning to go to this event] has asked about her. Nobody. I believe it's because the power of that show is in the characters, not in the actors. I, for one, like who Sarah Michelle Gellar appears to be. But there are a lot of fans who really could take her or leave her, while at the same time they just really adore Buffy."

— Jeanne Schinto

First Annual BuffyFest San Diego
Saturday, October 11
9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.
Upper Level
San Diego Concourse
202 C Street
Downtown
Cost: \$25-\$85
Info: 619-708-9124 or
www.buffyfest.com

Local Events
page 75

Classical Music
page 91

Art Museums & Galleries
page 93

Theater
page 94

Pop Music
page 100

Restaurants
page 136

Movies
page 149