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Why Are Most of the Big Studios Skipping Comic-Con This Year? | Exclusive

Marvel Studios and DC are both opting not to showcase any upcoming films in Hall H this month



Umberto Gonzalez July 3, 2025 @ 1:06 PM

This year's San Diego Comic-Con, the Mecca of all things geek, will be short on some of the key franchises that make fandom tick.

Marvel Studios, Lucasfilm (Star Wars), Warner Bros. (DC), Legendary (Dune, Godzilla), Sony (Spider-Man), Lionsgate (John Wick) and Paramount (Star Trek) are all skipping a film presence at the conference's famed Hall H, the 6,500-seat venue that has traditionally served as a launchpad for major franchise announcements and the premiere of exclusive sneak peaks.

The absence of many of the largest genre franchises — Marvel and DC movies in particular — is curious timing considering superhero movies are at an inflection point. For years, superhero movies have long dominated the box office, as well as Comic-Con's Hall H, but success has been elusive in 2025, and with disappointments like Marvel's "Captain America: Brave New World" and "Thunderbolts*" — both of which failed to crack $500 million at the worldwide box office — the genre is now facing a harsh reality check.

Comic-Con won't be completely devoid of studio offerings. While DC won't showcase any films, DC Studios will have a "Peacemaker" panel with co-chief James Gunn and star John Cena in attendance to promote the upcoming second season of the show. TheWrap has also exclusively learned that Universal Pictures is bringing two movies to Hall H, although it's still unclear what they are. Following its breakout presentation at CinemaCon in April, Amazon MGM Studios is making its first Hall H appearance with the Ryan Gosling-starring sci-fi film "Project Hail Mary" according to an insider and as TheWrap first previously reported, Disney is bringing "Tron: Ares" and "Predator: Badlands" to Hall H.

But the lack of usual superhero heavy hitters — with the upcoming "Superman" and "Fantastic Four" in particular — is notable at a time when moviegoers are increasingly fickle and studios need buzz wherever they can get it. That so many are opting out of Comic-Con this year raises questions about its effectiveness as a marketing vehicle for franchises that normally would receive a warm welcome there.

Multiple insiders who spoke to TheWrap said it simply comes down to timing and cost, but acknowledged the challenges that come with the event.

"I think it's expensive to go and hard for movies to really pop there now and move the needle," one top marketing exec told TheWrap. "It used to feel like a must."

For their part, the organizers of Comic-Con are cognizant of the effort it takes to create a splashy presence at their show.

"While we hope every studio or network could attend every year, we know that can't always be the case," said David Glanzer, chief communications and strategy officer for San Diego Comic Convention. "And if there are some who can't make it this year, we'll be here in 2026 and eagerly await their return."

Bad timing and high costs

Scheduling a slot at Comic-Con is delicate work and at least this year, the timing doesn't match up. Studios, for instance, make Hall H commitments roughly six months in advance, according to a second marketing executive who spoke to TheWrap.

“For us, we always go by release date,” the executive said. “So we were like, ‘All right, we got a movie within a couple months after Comic-Con. Let’s see what we have, what makes sense.’”

The challenge is compounded when studios have films releasing close to Comic-Con dates, which explains why “Superman” and “Fantastic Four” are no-shows — “Superman” will have already been in theaters for two weeks, and “Fantastic Four” opens the weekend of Comic-Con.

“You don’t really want to do something with a movie opening a week or two in Hall H, because it’s like, I’ve seen so much of the campaign already,” the executive added. “There’s no surprise left.”

The next film on the release calendar for Marvel Studios after “Fantastic Four” is “Spider-Man 4” in July 2026 (although Sony, not Disney, is distributing) and “Avengers: Doomsday” in December 2026, but the studio appears to have made the calculation that it’s better to wait and show off footage and cast from those highly anticipated sequels at next year’s Comic-Con than rush something out this year, when “Avengers” only just entered production and “Spider-Man” hasn’t started filming yet.



David Corenswet and Nicholas Hoult in "Superman" (Warner Bros./DC Studios)

DC Studios’ decision not to showcase any of their upcoming films is more puzzling given that “Supergirl” is in the can and “Superman” is kicking off James Gunn and Peter Safran’s reboot of the DC Universe, but they do seem confident in teasing their plans for the small screen. According to an insider, another Comic-Con this coming fall is being eyed to showcase “Supergirl.”

Then there are the financial considerations. A basic Hall H presentation featuring a filmmaker and two actors showing exclusive footage can run into "hundreds of thousands of dollars" when factoring talent fees, travel, accommodations and production expenses, according to one of the marketing executives.

For A-list talent, those costs escalate dramatically. "For the bigger stars, it gets really, really expensive," the second marketing executive said, noting that hair, makeup, styling and first-class accommodations can push talent costs alone into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Lost opportunity?

Costs and timing complications aside, the studios appear to be missing a chance to generate buzz in an exceptionally friendly environment. While most people have heard of San Diego Comic-Con, hardcore fans know Hall H as the true epicenter of fandom, with fans lining up for days (yes, days) to attend.

The modern era of Hall H began in 2007, when Marvel Studios Chief Kevin Feige and director Jon Favreau arrived with a surprise trailer for their upcoming "Iron Man," heralding Robert Downey Jr.'s iconic performance as Tony Stark and setting into motion the foundation of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

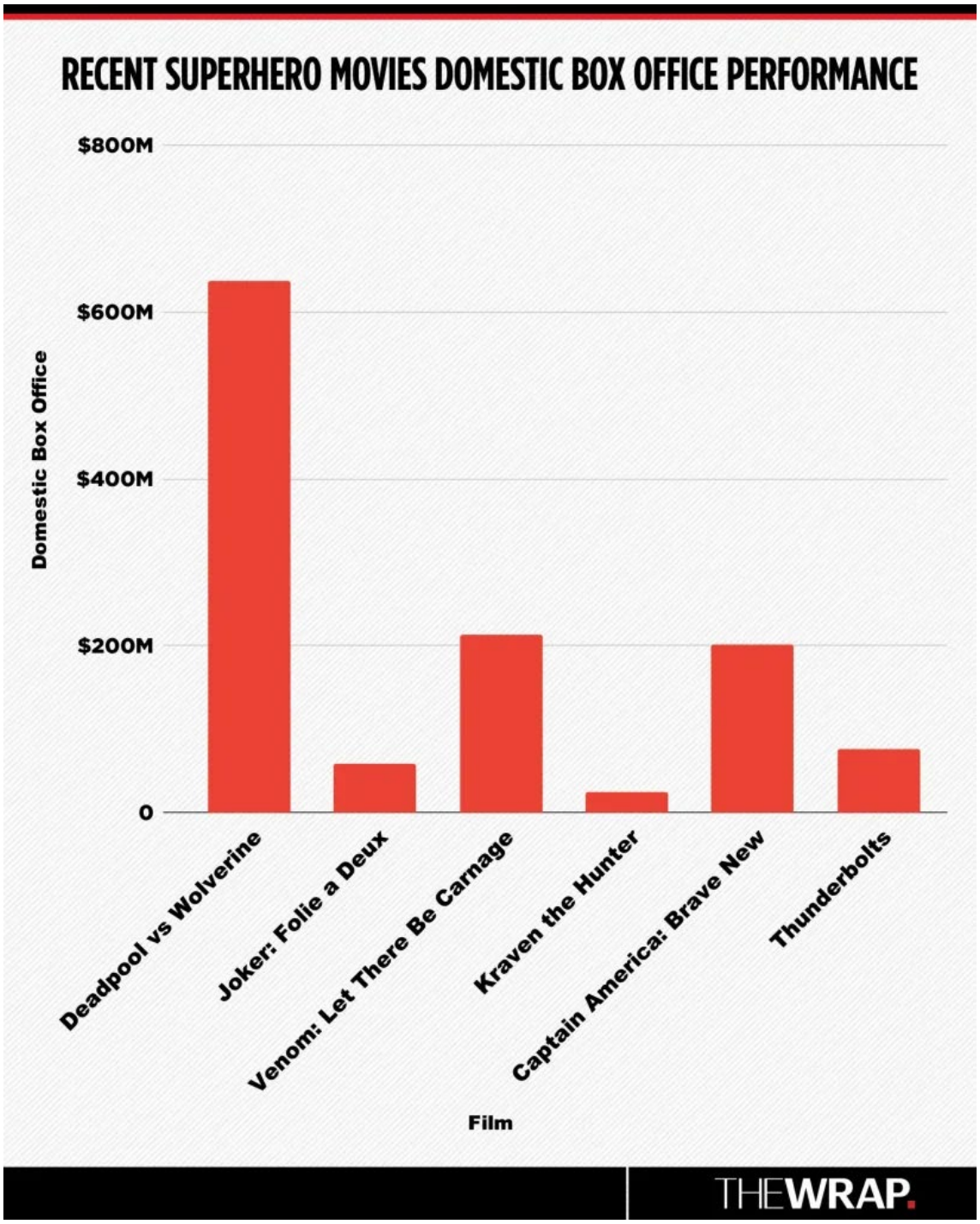


Robert Downey Jr. makes a surprise appearance at San Diego Comic-Con 2024 to announce his return as Doctor Doom. (Credit: Getty Images)

Hall H also played host to Tom Hiddleston's memorable entrance as Loki in 2013, delivering his "Glorious Purpose" speech in full character; and the return of Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill and Harrison Ford in 2014 for a "The Force Awakens" panel. Last

year, Marvel had fans inside the hall melting down after Downey Jr. unmasked himself as arch villain Doctor Doom for a pair of new “Avengers” movies (coming in 2026 and 2027).

Comic book movies, in particular, could use the buzz. The latest MCU entries, “Captain America: Brave New World” and “Thunderbolts,” didn’t cross half a billion worldwide and failed to meet expectations, while a franchise like “Venom” has seen diminishing returns with each installment. Then there was the latest Sony bomb in “Kraven the Hunter.”



The genre that once seemed like a sure bet no longer feels safe with the studios reassessing the costly investment in superhero movies.

The struggles have forced Marvel Studios to take a step back and retool their approach — the company has delayed the next "Avengers" movie a year and a half — while DC Studios is looking to relaunch its universe with "Superman" next week.

Marvel's "Fantastic Four," which comes after a string of disappointing MCU projects, launches a few weeks later.

Taken together, these two films, each of which boasts a rich legacy and name recognition, will serve as a good proxy for the wider state of superhero films — even as both completely bypass Comic-Con.

What's still coming to Hall H



Ryan Gosling in "Project Hail Mary" (Amazon MGM Studios)

In addition to the previously mentioned projects coming to Hall H, there are a few other notable players making the trip to San Diego.

TheWrap has also learned that Ketchup Entertainment will be bringing the live-action/CG hybrid movie "Coyote vs. Acme" to Comic-Con.

And although Paramount is sitting out Hall H, there will be on site activations for the Liam Neeson comedy "The Naked Gun," TheWrap has learned.

For the ultimate fan event of the year, this is a long way from the heights of the original "Star Wars" trio getting back together or the Avengers assembling, and all eyes will be on whether this is a blip or a sign of Comic-Cons to come.