



## EP 16 - Thoughts On New York Comic Con

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A few weeks ago I dealt with New York Comic Con. I've got some lingering thoughts that are worth a deeper dive on the show. If you've been interested in attending a large convention like NYCC, or create the kinds of content that would be embraced at a show like this, you'll want to tune into today's episode.

### 4 Thoughts:

1. It's fun being surrounded by geek culture
2. I'm frustrated by intellectual property theft
3. The mask mandate enforcement was horrific
4. One day was enough

### **1. It's fun being surrounded by geek culture**

- It's great being immersed in a place where everyone's into the same stuff you are.
- It's a chance to be reminded of your favorites, discover new content, get a firmer pulse of the industry, and meet the people who create the work we love.
- There were SO MANY incredibly talented artists: Comic creators, fine artists, writers, cosplayers, actors & actresses. It's inspiring to be in the presence of so many of the best & most talented creators.

- There's a great variety of booths you'll see at NYCC: Comic Sellers, corporations, merchants, designers, and of course artists
- Some corporations don't have products consumed by the target audience, but want to market to them with some kind of loose tie-in. I've seen companies like Geico and Doordash do this. It was nice to see a lot less of these this year compared to the last time I went in 2019 pre-COVID
- Merchants: Selling new and/or used products such as toys, collectible card games, Loungefly bags, etc..
  - There's a disturbingly high number I saw selling 'mystery boxes' for ridiculous amounts of money, around all sorts of properties.
- Artists: All kinds of artisans selling their original work, making new fans and connecting with existing ones. There are two sub-categories here:
  - Artists of original pieces, worlds & characters
  - Artists inspired by existing intellectual property - putting their spin on pop culture icons.
- With the improvements in 3D printing, engraving, and laser etching tools available, there are a fast-growing number of booths devoted to selling custom-designed merchandise such as wooden carving art, 3D printed dragons, geek-etched glass
- Here's where the fine line comes in: There were a lot of merchants who would sell products featuring characters, scenes, logos, etc... that were straight infringements on intellectual property, which brings me to my second point:

## 2. I'm frustrated by intellectual property theft

- NYCC has a defined BOOTLEG POLICY, which says verbatim:

*The buying and selling of counterfeit / knock-off / unlicensed materials is not tolerated at NYCC. NYCC is a celebration of the best of popular culture, and bootlegs have no place in the show. Violation of this rule will result in one and only one warning. A second violation and you'll be removed from the show.*

- Several booths were selling displaying counterfeit DVDs - but this is much more of a minor issue compared to the intellectual property infringement that was rampant: Booths selling vinyl decals of pop-cultural logos & graphics, the etching & engraving I mentioned earlier, and more.
- Here too NYCC has a clear policy in place. And to their credit, it makes sense from their perspective:

*Exhibitors are advised that Management will not interpret claims of a utility patent, interpret the scope of protection for a registered trademark or registered copyright, or specifically make any judgments as to the sufficiency of disclosures in patents, the validity of any patents, likelihood of confusion between different marks, fame of a mark, dilution of a mark, fair use of another's mark, priority of rights in a mark, what amounts to a substantial taking of a copyrighted work or what is a fair use of a copyrighted work.*

- So here's the issue: **It's so much work to run around a show claiming infringement.**
- Each seller is supposed to have their New York State tax certificate on display in their booth.
  - So why not put the burden on the seller? Whenever selling a protect using copyrighted material, a license to sell said copyrighted material must also be displayed.

### 3. The mask mandate enforcement was horrific

- The show made a huge deal of this announcement before the show, and again I quote:

*As an extra precaution for New York Comic Con 2022, we have made the decision to require approved face coverings for all participants at all times while indoors at NYCC. Verification of*

*vaccination or proof of negative test are not required for admission to the Javits Center or NYCC 2022.*

- I don't care where you stand on mask mandates & vaccines. That's not the point here: The organizers clearly made the choice to take this stance... Then did absolutely *nothing* to enforce it.
- If you're someone who decided to attend *because* of the added element of safety - you would be furious. And from all accounts many were.
- From booth workers, to attendees, to the staff themselves: It was atrocious to see organizers just do nothing to enforce their own rules... which may be why people were allowed to sell bootleg DVDs and such.

#### 4. One day was enough

- NYCC is expensive. I went for one day, Thursday, the cheapest of the 4. In total I spent:
  - \$86.27 for my 1-day badge, which includes \$15.50 in assorted service fees and \$5.77 in sales tax
  - \$30.50 for a round-trip ticket on NJ Transit
    - Caveat: I live near a train station and walked to it, otherwise add \$6 for daily parking
  - I spent \$18 for a garbage hot pretzel and a beer (seriously the worst pretzel in the history of the City of New York)
  - The opportunity cost of a day of my time
  - And none of that includes what I spent at vendors at the show
- It's a massive show, but I couldn't imagine dropping several hundred dollars to attend the show. Not to mention if I didn't live close enough to sleep in my own bed. Hotel rooms in NYC (like everywhere else) are expensive!

#### Episode 16 Quote:

From Cory Doctorow's book: Information Doesn't Want To Be Free

*People actually like supporting the artists whose work they like. It makes them feel happy. You don't have to force them. And if you force them, they don't feel as good.*