

## What's going on with Dublin Comic Con?

If you've been on the nerdier side of social media lately, you may have noticed some Irish creators speaking out about Dublin Comic Con. When you search Dublin Comic Con on TikTok or Twitter/X, the words 'controversy' and 'bad experience' will be up high in your recommended searches. A lot of the evidence of any controversy at all surrounding the convention is limited to posts by attendees and negative reactions on staff posts in an otherwise empty Discord server, and Facebook posts with disabled comments.

On the 9th of November 2023, a petition titled "Reform the Management and Policies of Dublin Comic Con"<sup>1</sup> was started by an attendee, Jess Foylan aka. @Pokedexjexk<sup>2</sup>. The subsequent backlash after their last event led to DCC's Facebook page posting a Google form, asking attendees for their input, but turned the comments off on the post, quoting it was "in order to encourage people to leave constructive and solution based feedback."<sup>3</sup> Soon after, a Google form was released by another attendee, Alex Hughes aka. @mighty\_kraken<sup>4</sup> collecting complaints and negative experiences.

So, what happened this year? Why are so many creators, small businesses and attendees speaking out about the event and its management? Is the backlash just the result of a few

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<sup>1</sup> "Reform the Management and Policies of Dublin Comic Con," Change.org, 2023

<<https://www.change.org/p/reform-the-management-and-policies-of-dublin-comic-con?redirect=false>> [accessed 8 January 2024]

<sup>2</sup> Foylan, Jess, "@pokedexjexk," Instagram

<<https://www.instagram.com/pokedexjexk/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D>> [accessed 8 January 2024]

<sup>3</sup> DCC, "Feedback Update," Facebook.com, 2023

<<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=737790441721644&set=a.560320486135308>> [accessed 8 January 2024]

<sup>4</sup> Hughes, Alex, "@mighty\_kraken," Instagram <[https://www.instagram.com/mighty\\_kraken/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/mighty_kraken/?hl=en)> [accessed 8 January 2024]

isolated incidents, or has Dublin Comic Con become a, as Jak aka. @jekylldraws described in their TikTok about DCC, “a much bigger monster”<sup>5</sup> than its management anticipated?

Currently, the most viewed video on TikTok related to Dublin Comic Con, is a video by Bunny aka. @bunnys\_brains, featuring her showing off her costume at the convention. The video has garnered 1.2 million views and a lot of positive attention for the convention.<sup>6</sup> Her video discussing Dublin Comic Con, published on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2023, is attributed by other creators as the video that started the recent discussions.

In the video, she brings up complaints primarily about the cosplay competition. Bunny details errors in the management of the event, stating that *‘to this day I still don’t know where I was supposed to check in.’* A complaint Bunny brings up is the organizers allowing convention attendees to *‘come up on stage and show off their costumes’*, leaving competitors feeling insulted after completing long applications and *‘preparing for months’*. While Bunny was not comfortable being interviewed and allowed me to quote her videos, fellow attendee and cosplay competition competitor Ro, aka @Dixx0nn<sup>7</sup>, corroborated her story and told me more about the problems with the cosplay competition.

*“...they had already done two categories and once my category, which was over 16s had finished, that was basically meant to be the end of the contest, where we hear the winners and whatnot. Then, the host of the cosplay contest invited members of the audience to come up*

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<sup>5</sup> @jekylldraws, “DCC Takes Part 2,” 2023

<<https://www.tiktok.com/@jekylldraws/video/7300211374817348896?lang=en>>

<sup>6</sup> “Bunnys\_brains,” Tiktok.com <[https://www.tiktok.com/@bunnys\\_brains?lang=en](https://www.tiktok.com/@bunnys_brains?lang=en)> [accessed 8 January 2024]

<sup>7</sup> Ro/Star, “@dixx0n,” Instagram <<https://www.instagram.com/dixx0nn/?hl=en>> [accessed 8 January 2024]

*and show off their cosplays, and it was audible enough for him to hear that the actual contestants didn't want audience members to go up.”*

Ro goes into more detail about the lack of space for competitors, where in previous years competitors had a sort of ‘green room’ to wait, how *‘it wasn't done as it was done last year because once we arrived, they just randomly queued us up and told us what we were going to do, but it was also down a small narrow corridor when lots of people have, like, elaborate props and big costumes, and there were trolleys of trays or food or I don't know what, and it had it made us have to be squished into corners when there was barely any space to move around.’*

When Ro asks a member of staff where competitors should put their belongings so they can go on stage, she says a member of staff told her *“Ohh, no, we're not gonna do that.” So, I had to leave my little, small backpack with a stall that was on the same floor as the convention, and then when I came out it turns out lots of people had gone to that same stall so they could mind their bags, because they had nowhere to put them’,* leaving attendees to rely on the goodwill of vendors and other attendees to keep their belongings safe, where there were previously facilities to do so. When I asked multiple attendees why this might have happened, nearly everyone including Alex Hughes, the creator of the large Google Document archiving comments and recording complaints, had heard a staff member had lost the contestant list with *‘no backup’*.

Bunny also brought up in her video, how many attendees feel that Dublin Comic Con *‘consistently oversell their tickets’*. This is a complaint corroborated by every attendee I spoke to, and overcrowding was brought up as a serious issue in every conversation I had about DCC. Ro commented on how *‘people will often just go to Tesco across the road and*

*get a meal deal and then come back.. there was kind of the element of people not being able to get back in and people just not being able to get in full stop upon arrival.'*

This is complaint corroborated by both Jess Foylan, the creator of the petition against the management of Dublin Comic Convention, and Alex Hughes. When I spoke to Jess, she went into detail about her experience at Dublin Comic Convention and the overcrowding due to alleged ticket overselling.

*'They do [oversell tickets], the problem is they say the convention center can hold X amount of people... that is true if you take into consideration all of the different auditorium rooms they have with thousands of seats in them. The fact it's eight stories, if people were spread out through there, that would be fine, but the problem is they hold the maximum amount of people who can be in the convention center on the first two floors, and that's where almost everybody is, because that's where the Artist's Alley is upstairs and everything else is downstairs. So, like the meet and greets, everything, Artist's Alley are all upstairs... it's not spread out enough. And when they oversell tickets, they don't let people in, like you could have a paid for a ticket and you'll be refused entry because, they've oversold the tickets and you won't get your money back.'*

When I asked other creators to corroborate this, Ro highlighted the comments left across multiple platforms sharing similar experiences, recorded in Alex's Google Doc which also includes comments from anonymous volunteers at DCC highlighting poor management<sup>8</sup>.

Another attendee I spoke to, Shea, confirmed members of the Discord server discussed this complaint frequently, describing the convention as '*RAMMED*' and confirmed attendees were '*denied entry*' because the convention had been '*over-sold*'. A staff member is quoted

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<sup>8</sup> "Messages/Comments/Criticisms – Google Drive," Google.com  
<[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PgMU7cFEQGQ3NuGN\\_AanFPGEm3daQ9I3](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PgMU7cFEQGQ3NuGN_AanFPGEm3daQ9I3)> [accessed 8 January 2024]

as saying to an attendee that already paid for a ticket, *“Oh no, it's too full. You can't come in right now.”*

A complaint related to the overcrowding in the convention center, and possibly the most serious complaint brought up was the lack of disability access. This complaint was brought up by multiple creators, and Jess shared her personal experience as a disabled attendee with me.

*“I was stuck. Basically, I went up to a security guard and said I needed to go into the accessibility line. Before you go, you have to send in proof of your disability to get the carer's ticket and your own ticket, which I had. I had all of that on me. I had all the proof I needed. And the first security guide I went up to said that they didn't know what I was talking about and then my boyfriend, he didn't really understand what was going on time, he was like “oh she has autism, we can't stand in this line”, and the security guard looked that both of us and says “what's autism?” and we were like “oh”, so we kind of gave up on him, and went over to a different security guard who pointed us into a new queue. It had all these barriers up, so I presume maybe when we walk through the barriers, we'll be at the front of the door. But it turns out that was the normal, long, winding queue. Well, it was lashing rain, freezing, like standing in soaking wet clothes as an autistic person is a nightmare and I kept trying to call over security to be like, because they could open the gates to let me out. But they wouldn't like, look at me or even acknowledge what was going on until I got up to the front and it was like a volunteer I believe, that I showed the policy to, that they have an accessibility queue, just kind of three or four of them that were panicked, and they just let me in without scanning my tickets or anything.”*

This experience is corroborated by Keith Callaghan, a long term attendee that has attended every Dublin Comic Convention in it's 10 year history. When I asked him to confirm this

story, he described witnessing multiple attendees *'being screamed at by the staff who's scanning the tickets, while other staff are calling [attendees] down to them'*. When asked how DCC could improve, Keith said that there needed to be *'more of an understanding of disabilities by the staff as not all [disabilities] are visible'*. Jess spoke more on the issue of invisible disabilities and misunderstandings by DCC staff, describing the online application process and how disabled attendees are required to provide ID and personal information about diagnoses that many disabled people might not have. She describes the process she went through to acquire an autism ID card from the charity As I Am, and a carers ticket, but was left feeling like she had wasted time and money.

*"..the carers ticket, they have all the proof that they need it. They filled that out online and then to get there and be asked, "Oh, what's wrong with you?" Or being told that they don't look disabled enough is just madness to me.'* Alex also shared that attendees he spoke with as part of collecting complaints for the Google Doc had been told they *'didn't look disabled.'*

DCC's Accessibility policy corroborates the proof Jess collected before attending DCC, however since creating the petition, the statement, *'Please do not be offended if the staff asks you a few questions or for proof listed below as we want to ensure the system is not abused.'*<sup>9</sup> It is unclear how exactly staff are trained to identify invisible disabilities by eye, or how this system has been abused previously.

Jess also brought up how, after she created the petition, she spoke to staff of the Convention Center Dublin about her complaints, and *'extra training'* for DCC staff was briefly brought up. When I reached out to Suzanne McGann of the Convention Center, she stated that no official comment about DCC could be made, stating that *'Out of respect of confidentiality for*

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<sup>9</sup> "Accessibility FAQs – Dublin Comic Con," Dublincomiccon.com <<https://dublincomiccon.com/faqs/>> [accessed 8 January 2024]

*our clients, we cannot discuss any specifics regarding events hosted in the convention center by our clients. Our location is disability accessible, and all information is available on our website and to our clients.'*

While other complaints such as the reduced access and poor management of the Artist's Alley, as highlighted by both Jak<sup>10</sup> and IanFayArt's<sup>11</sup> Twitter threads on the subjects, the subject of DCC's alleged lack of disability access, and inability to honor their own policies due to overcrowding and alleged overselling of tickets is a serious issue attendees and customers are taking very seriously. This follows previous criticism of a Scientology stall at a previous Dublin Comic Convention as discussed in the Irish Times<sup>12</sup>.

As Spring Dublin Comic Con approaches in March, the Discord remains disabled and attendees remain in the dark about details of accessibility, vendor tables and potential improvements. Long time attendees discuss potential alternatives in conventions like Megacon. Dublin Comic Convention were unavailable for comment.

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<sup>10</sup> Jak, "I Don't Want This Conversation to Lose Steam Just yet so Here Comes My Megathread on DCC / Dublin Comic Con. I Anticipate It's Going to Be Lengthy and for the First Time in a Long Time I Am Not Holding Back. Let's Get into It from the Perspective of an Artist Alley Seller," Twitter, 2023 <https://twitter.com/jekylldraws/status/1724406895815872610> [accessed 8 January 2024]

<sup>11</sup> IanFayArt, "As a Little Update, Dublin Comic Con Sent the Poll Asking If March's Selection Should Be Refunded and Redone (Something Nobody Asked for) to Everyone Who Was Approved This Year, with No Regard for the Fact That Some Have Already Booked Hotels and Flights. <https://t.co/4ncmzg50Nx>," Twitter, 2023 <<https://twitter.com/IanFayArt/status/1726622105587064914>> [accessed 8 January 2024]

<sup>12</sup> McGreevy, Ronan, "Criticism over Scientology Stand at Dublin Comic Con," Irish Times (The Irish Times, 12 August 2019) <<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/criticism-over-scientology-stand-at-dublin-comic-con-1.3983170>> [accessed 8 January 2024]

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