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Title: "We are building fun for the fans"

Subtitle: ReedPOP can be the quirky side of Reed Exhibitions (part of RELX group)

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London - No one is shocked when suddenly the 'Ring Spirits' from the filmed fantasy epic Lord of the Rings arrive. In fact, a couple would like a selfie.

When the girl flashes her phone, there is a demonic scream - a sound sample from the famous blockbuster trilogy. For a moment the girl seems out of balance. But then she bursts out laughing. Welcome to the Comic Con in London.

Nothing seems further removed from the universe of an average Comic Con visitor than the listed RELX Group, the English-Dutch company that was previously known as Reed Elsevier. The visitors of Comic Con are fond of superheroes, Japanese animated figures and video games. They prefer to dress like them as well: the more they resemble the heroes, the better. This is a bit different from legal reference works, data-driven risk profiles and the professional trade fairs for which the RELX Group is best known.

Lance Fensterman, President of ReedPOP, a division of RELX Group, that organizes exhibitions, chuckles: "That's why we launched the ReedPOP brand with its own team. ReedPOP is the quirky side of Reed Exhibitions. We build fun for our fans. But we do combine the best of both worlds."

"Reed Exhibitions has the logistical experience and financial resources to build large events", says Fensterman. "But when it comes to understanding pop culture and our fans, ReedPOP is at its best. We look quite different from the rest of the organization too. I don't have to shave every day and I can wear jeans and sneakers," he jokes.

Super heroes are real cash cows

ReedPOP came from afar. Twelve years ago, Fensterman started a Comic Con in New York: "We started from scratch!" Today, Reed Exhibitions' eccentric younger brother has grown into an organization that has around \$100 million in turnover and is active in eleven countries. Over the past year, one and a half million people attended ReedPOP events.

But what is Comic Con and what explains the enormous success? The first Comic Con was held 45 years ago in the basement of a church in San Diego, USA, Fensterman says. In fact, that edition was not much more than a fair for comic strip fanatics to exchange books, called comics in the US.

Comic Con itself is not an official brand, or trade mark. There are thousands of Comic Cons worldwide, often organized locally by enthusiasts themselves. "We can do that bigger and better, we thought," says Fensterman. The Comic Cons organized by ReedPOP have grown into huge multimedia events which not only focus on comics, but also now include games, films, TV series, fashion and art.

Fensterman adds: "But here you see self-expression coming to life on a huge scale. These are people who do not just like something, but love it very much. That love is even part of their identity, and so they all dress up like their favourite superheroes."

This phenomenon is in fact the backbone of success, says Fensterman. "The evening before the event started, I was already walking around here. It looks good, I thought. There are good brands,

interesting artists and fun commercial activities. But it is dead. Only when you add the energy of the visiting fans then it all starts to live.”

Visitors themselves bring life to Comic Con

Last year, ReedPOP took over the British company, MCM Comic Con, which organizes four annual Comic Cons in London and Birmingham. According to Fensterman, London has the potential to become the largest Comic Con event in the world. Currently the largest Comic Con is in New York, where ReedPOP sells 225,000 tickets annually. “But we cannot get any bigger here, because the location is quite limiting. Here in London (last weekend about 90,000 tickets sold, ed.), we have enough space to grow with the exhibition and conference halls at Excel Centre,” explained Fensterman.

ReedPOP benefits from the already growing market for video games. But also, for instance, the success of Marvel, the publishing company of superhero comics that has now set up a whole empire in Hollywood of superhero films and series.

Fensterman: “It is tempting to think that we are so smart. But we were also lucky with the timing. The fan, who used to be known as a nerd of pop culture is no longer of a marginal type. We sometimes say - we have crawled out of the cellar and we now determine what happens in the world. Look at Elon Musk! Come on, you know what I mean?”

Side article titled:

ReedPOP sees no opportunities in the Netherlands

London - Although ReedPOP is part of the Dutch-English company RELX Group, no activities are planned in the Netherlands.

“Unfortunately, we have no current plans in the Netherlands but I love how pop culture is experienced here,” says Lance Fensterman of ReedPOP. In the Netherlands the market is already divided and Comic Con is in the hands of a competitor, says Fensterman. “And there are really good shows there, believe me, I've seen them all well. But if you want to be authentic, you should not force anything. That is not cool. Aggressiveness is not rewarded in this market.”

Fensterman should therefore not be in the Netherlands for growth. But he has to grow. “We are part of a listed company. So, we have to grow. The absolute hunger for this type of event has fortunately not yet diminished in the twelve years that we are doing this now.”

Fensterman states that he puts the fans first in order to realize growth. “With us the order is different from that of most other companies. We first think of what 'cool stuff' we are going to do for our fans now. That way of working has growth as a result. Often it is the other way around: a company wants to grow and then asks the question how are we going to do that? For us it is very simple: if you do not please the fans, you do not have good results either.”

ReedPOP from 0 to \$100 million

2006: RELX Exhibitions introduces ReedPOP which launches Comic Con New York

2010: Launch Star Wars Celebration; Acquisition Singapore Toy

2014: Launch New York Superweek, the first Comic Con Indonesia

2015: Launch Comic Con Austria, Comic Con Paris and Comic Con China

2017: Launch Comic Con Seoul, Acquired MCM Comic Con, Current turnover ReedPOP \$100 million
2018: Launch Comic Con in London and Birmingham

Parent company RELX Group

Market cap: \$44,7 billion

Turnover in 2017: \$9,8 billion

Reed Exhibitions (which ReedPOP is a sub-brand of) generated 15 percent of the turnover in 2016.

n.b: this article originally appeared in Dutch and has been translated to English in-house.