

UNITED STATES

Crying on the inside? Creepy craze causes crisis for real clowns

Performers claim incidents have created fear and caused sharp drop in bookings

By ASSOCIATED PRESS
in New York

This year's creepy clown craze has become a nightmare before Halloween for actual, working clowns, who say their bookings at parties and other events have dropped sharply, even after many of the social media-fueled scary clown sightings have turned out to be hoaxes.

Some fear going out with their greasypaint makeup and red noses will make them a target of police, or even marauding mobs who take to the streets on so-called "clown hunts".

"It's definitely a scary feeling leaving your house and you fear you are going to get jumped because you're dressed as a clown," says Cyrus Zavieh, a New York City hospital administrator who also performs professionally as Cido the Clown.

"You're there to make them happy, to make them have fun, and now they are saying, 'Aaaagghh!'" Zavieh says. "All of a sudden these stories are putting fear into kids ... Before they'd just look the other way, but now it's like, 'You're a scary clown and I hate you.'"

The World Clown Association

“It's a scary feeling leaving your house and you fear you are going to get jumped.”

Cyrus Zavieh, hospital employee who performs as Cido the Clown

tion — comprised of more than 2,000 members in 30 countries — has been flooded with calls from scared performers. It's been sending out safety tips, suggesting clowns consider changing into their costumes when they arrive at a party or go with a handler.

Association president Randy Christensen says clowns are also increasingly getting requests for "modified performances" in which they entertain without makeup and traditional clown attire.

This week, retail giant Target took the step of pulling scary clown masks from its shelves. And McDonald's says its signature clown character, Ronald McDonald, will be keeping a lower profile.

All of the fallout follows a phenomenon in the US involving dozens of stories, many fabricated, about clowns stalking or attacking people.

In multiple states, people have called police to report being menaced by people in clown costumes. In Kentucky, a man dressed as a clown was arrested after lurking in the woods. Children in Ohio and Texas have been charged with making clown-related threats to school classmates. A New York City teen told police a clown threatened him with a knife in the subway.

"They aren't clowns. They are clown impersonators," said Wendy Pincus, who has performed in New York City for the last 20 years. "We're here to make people happy. We don't threaten people. We bring joy."

However, experts say it's relatively common for people to feel creeped out by clowns.

"It primarily has to do with the exaggerated makeup and features. We recognize it, but there is something abnormal," said Dr Kristie Golden, associate director of operations for psychiatry and neurosciences at Stony Brook University Hospital. "We can be drawn in by that or we can be repelled."

World Clown Association's Christensen says this year's clown scares seems to be reaching new heights, and suggests working clowns repel them the same way they always have, by spreading a message of happiness.

"Go out and clown and show people what this is," he says. "Show them what good entertainment is — show them what a caring clown does."



Quick clean-up

A truck driver wipes the mirror of his decorated truck in Charsadda outside Peshawar, Pakistan, on Tuesday. FAYAZ AZIZ / REUTERS

AUSTRIA

Row erupts over plans to raze Hitler house

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE in Vienna

A new row erupted on Tuesday over Austria's plans to raze the house where Adolf Hitler was born, with experts saying they opposed the demolition only a day after a decision was announced.

After a lengthy legal battle with the current owner, Interior Minister Wolfgang Sobotka said on Monday the listed property in the northern town of Braunau would be "torn down" to stop it from becoming a neo-Nazi shrine.

A new building on the site would be used by a charity or the local authorities, he told Austrian media.

Sobotka said the decision was based on recommendations from an expert committee.

But several of the panel's 13 members denied on Tuesday that the commission had backed the push to bulldoze the yellow corner house where Hitler was born on April 20, 1889.

"The demolition option had been explicitly mentioned in the (government's) proposal



Protesters gather outside the house where Adolf Hitler was born in Braunau Am Inn, Austria. The house has become a thorny draw for neo-Nazis. JOE KLAMAR / AFP

and was not approved by us," said Clemens Jabloner, the ex-president of Austria's highest administrative court, in a joint statement with historian Oliver Rathkolb.

Instead, the committee had suggested a "profound architectural redesign".

"A demolition would amount to negating Austria's Nazi past," the pair said.

Braunau mayor Johannes Waidbacher, another panel member, also said there had been "no mention of demolition" in the report.

Responding to the criticism, Sobotka on Tuesday insisted the main goal was to destroy any "resemblance" to the current house, "especially its outer appearance".

Whether this process would involve an actual demolition

could be discussed, he told journalists in Vienna.

The government would put the new building design out to tender, Sobotka added.

A copy of the commission's report showed the experts had been "against leaving an empty space instead of a building".

"A complete transformation or removal of the building is in principle suited to erase the place's ideological connotation and dissolve the emotional ties with Hitler. But ... a historical contextualization remains necessary," the report read.

Although Hitler only spent the first few weeks of his life at Number 15 Salzburger Vorstadt Street, the address has been a persistent thorn in Austria's side, drawing Nazi sympathizers from around the world.

Internet Plus expo looks to the future

By ZHUAN TI
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The second China (Guangdong) International Internet Plus Expo opens on Oct 20 in Foshan, Guangdong province, aiming to build a platform for the convergent development of internet technology and traditional manufacturing.

Exhibitions in the four-day expo cover topics like internet-aided smart manufacturing, financial management, electronic commerce, and innovation and entrepreneurship, according to Chen Xinwen, deputy chief of the Foshan Publicity Department.

Chen said that 613 enterprises from home and abroad will attend the expo.

Chinese internet and IT giants such as Tencent, Baidu, Huawei Technologies, and international companies like Google, Facebook and Twitter will show their technologies, products and services at the expo.

In addition, delegations from the United States, Israel, Japan, Singapore and countries in the Asia-Pacific region will also have exhibitions.

In a total exhibition area of 45,000 square meters, there are seven zones: intelligent manufacturing, cutting-edge internet-plus technologies, intelligent home furnishing, smart cities, Internet-Plus finance, e-commerce, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Zhou Peishan, deputy chief of the Foshan Science and Technology Bureau, said this year's expo focuses on internet-plus manufacturing, so an international smart manufacturing show is a major part of the expo.

Thirty-four forums and meetings related to the Internet-Plus strategy will be held during the expo, including the New Economic and New Energy Summit Forum, the



An industrial robotics show at last year's Internet Plus expo attracts the attention of many visitors. ZHANG MINGSHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

2016 Sino-German Enterprise Investment and Acquisition Forum, the second dialogue on the Made in China 2025 and German Industry 4.0 strategies.

As acquisition is becoming a useful method to help Chinese companies' international operations, Foshan's businesses are also cooperating with their German counterparts to step onto the world stage, according to Wu Yi, chief of the investment service bureau at the Foshan Sino-German Industrial Service Zone.

He said during the 2016 Sino-German Enterprise Investment and Acquisition Forum that Foshan's firms will seek further cooperation

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CHINA (GUANGDONG) INTERNATIONAL INTERNET PLUS EXPOSITION
中国 (广东) 国际 "互联网+" 博览会



opportunities with German companies.

Wu noted that Foshan, an industrial hub in South China, is also a major stage for Sino-German industrial exchanges. The Sino-German Industrial Service Zone has been regarded as one of the six major development-boosting platforms in Guangdong province.

At this year's expo, a number of investment service companies will be invited to introduce current and future trends of mergers and acquisitions in Germany and beyond, as reference for Chinese enterprises.

Moreover, Wu said local enterprises with overseas M&A experience will share

their experiences at the forum.

Aiming to facilitate the cooperation of small and medium-sized enterprises in the two countries, a Sino-German industrial cities alliance was recently launched in Hanover, according to Wu.

The second China (Guangdong) International Internet Plus Expo was organized by the Guangdong provincial government, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology, the Chinese Academy of Engineering and China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

A total of 456 companies and 246,000 visitors attended last year's expo.

Foshan special



Smart technologies such as robotics are playing an important role in upgrading Foshan's manufacturing industries. ZHANG MINGSHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Foshan takes action to advance industries

By ZHUAN TI

If a person is ill, he or she can walk to the neighboring hospital to get medicine, but if a huge machine in a plant is "ill", the best remedy is to let the repair workers come.

Currently, a mobile phone app called Plant Assistant in Foshan can locate nearby repair workers and send them to machines that need assistance.

"The platform runs in a pattern similar to Didi Chuxing's popular online ride-hailing app. Its users can find nearby workers to solve machine faults right on the spot," said Guo Zhenfa, chairman of an air compressor company in Foshan, which uses the app.

Guo said that there are more than 4,000 professional repair workers who are offering services through the app.

The story happens in Foshan, a traditional manufacturing hub in Guangdong province. The city has recently been heading for Internet-Plus industrial development. Unlike other cities in the country, those platforms based on internet technologies were not made for the common needs of consumers, according to industrial insiders.

"Foshan has a favorable environment for growing internet businesses for industries. Many of the internet platforms are built for the manufacturing sectors," said Song Bingchen, CEO of the local Huicong Household Electronic.

"Foshan is most likely to become China's innovation hub for internet-industry integration," Song said.

Foshan is the first city in Guangdong province to apply the Internet-Plus strategy to its industrial development, according to the city's government.

A number of tech companies from home and abroad have settled in Foshan to serve local manufacturers.

Large projects in the field include the Zhongguancun Internet Plus Intelligent Manufacturing Center and the University of Michigan international intelligent manufacturing innovation center in Nanhai district.

"We are keeping up with the innovation-driven development strategy proposed by the provincial government by launching a number of major technology platforms in the city," said Lu Yi, Party chief of Foshan. He added that Foshan is planning to build a national-level manufacturing innovation hub.