

CHICAGO AUTO SHOW

Media pass proves passé

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OPINION EDITOR

I went to the Chicago Auto Show for the first time this year. I feel that perhaps getting a media pass wasn't the best way to experience the show for the first time. There was a lack of excitement on the floor for the first couple days. Something was missing in the huge space of McCormick Place that was largely empty of people. The auto show is in some ways like a concert; the people around you make it more exciting than if you were to be listening to music or looking at cars by yourself.

The media pass itself wasn't as commanding as I expected it to be; I was able

to register and receive the pass without any problems, but getting on the floor was a struggle. I was stopped and told I wasn't allowed to come in because I didn't have a band. Proudly displaying my media pass, I told her that I was with media.

The interrogation continued, "How'd you get that?" This really just struck me blind. I wanted to say "Oh, you know, I killed a guy and stole it." Luckily, I simply looked at the supervisor, who let us in without any more trouble. This is just one goofy example of what it was like, but the general feeling continued throughout the day. Even the floor representatives were off-putting and cold towards me, as if I didn't deserve to be there,

or I wasn't worth their time. I mean, I thought these people were being paid to be nice and talk to people. At the very least, considering how empty it was, if it was me, I'd be grateful to have someone to talk to and show off what's new. I thought I was dressed rather well for the occasion with my suit jacket and fancy camera, but I suppose when compared to the other media agents, most of whom were old, balding, white guys, I appeared like a child trying to sneak around.

The floor itself was dead. It felt sad, pompous, and too huge. I went back with my dad for his birthday on a public day and things just felt more reasonable and alive. There was energy and lights and demonstrations left and

right. Suddenly, my media pass was valuable and people wanted to chat with me about my experience and what I thought of the new models. The lines, of course, were ridiculous and having the opportunity to go on the test track was nice, but I thought the show was about cars, not pinball machines and simulators.

Contrasting how my dad described his first time at the auto show years ago and my experience, it's almost inexplicable. I assumed that preferential status and first look access could only guarantee a better time, but it felt wrong.

I look forward to next year, having my expectations properly aligned, but all in all, media day is largely overrated.

