

‘Jeopardy!’ Champion Buzzy Cohen Reveals 5 Surprising Parts of the Game Show That You Don’t See on TV

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“Jeopardy!” champion Buzzy Cohen hosts a new podcast called “This is Jeopardy!” about the history of the iconic game show.

Buzzy Cohen on the set of "Jeopardy!" Jeopardy Productions Inc

Buzzy Cohen, a music executive from Los Angeles, won \$164,603 in a nine-day streak on "Jeopardy!" in 2016, then won the 2017 Tournament of Champions. He returned to the Tournament of Champions in 2021, this time as a guest host.

Now, he's the host of a new podcast exploring the show's history and enduring success: "This is Jeopardy!...The Story of America's Favorite Quiz Show." Produced by Sony Music Entertainment in partnership with Sony Pictures Television, the first episode premieres April 26.

"In the podcast, we're really looking at how we got to this point where 'Jeopardy!' is an institution, not just a game show, not just a quiz show," he told Insider. "There's

something for the ‘Jeopardy!’ fans, but also for people who are just interested in American culture and entertainment.”

Cohen also shared behind-the-scenes insights from his time on the show that viewers at home don’t get to see.

“Jeopardy!” tapes five shows – an entire week’s worth – every day.

Buzzy Cohen competes on “Jeopardy!” Jeopardy Productions Inc.

“Jeopardy!” winners change outfits between tapings to give the appearance of competing on a different day, when in fact shows are taped one after another.

Cohen, who played 10 consecutive games in two back-to-back taping days, said he didn't anticipate just how "exhausting" the schedule would be.

"That is certainly something that I think people are surprised by," he said. "It really makes the fact that people can go on these long runs even more impressive because it's endurance as well as mental and physical stamina."

The host of "Jeopardy!" doesn't have much screen time, but is busy during every moment of the show.

Alex Trebek hosted "Jeopardy!" from 1984 until his death in 2020. Eric McCandless/ABC via Getty Images via Business Insider.

"Jeopardy!" hosts wear an earpiece to communicate with producers as they juggle many tasks that aren't visible to viewers at home.

"What's kind of surprising is how little you're maybe on-screen, but you are reading the clue, calling a contestant, making a ruling, asking them to select," Cohen said. "Whereas if you're a contestant and someone else has a daily double, you're kind of like, 'Okay, take a breath, I'm going to regroup here.' But if you're the host, you're in all of those moments."

In addition to running the gameplay, Cohen says bringing the enthusiasm that keeps "Jeopardy!" fans tuning in is also a crucial job for the host.

"If you're not interested in the material you're reading, it's going to come across to the people viewing it at home," he said. "Really staying in it and really being committed to it was something that Alex Trebek made look so easy, and I think is not as easy as it looks."

A man named Michael Harris manually controls the "Jeopardy!" buzzer.

Ken Jennings holds the “Jeopardy!” buzzer. Getty Images via BI

Harris, who is also a researcher on the show, sits at the judges’ table offscreen. When the host finishes reading a clue, Harris flips a switch and enables the buzzers. If contestants buzz in before the host has finished reading the clue, they’re locked out for a quarter of a second, making buzzer timing a key strategy to winning the game, *The Ringer’s* Claire McNear reported.

“This is Jeopardy!...The Story of America’s Favorite Quiz Show” devotes an entire episode to the buzzer.

“We talk about the contestant point of view,” Cohen said. “There are contestant buzzer experts. There’s a guy who we

interviewed who's written a book on the buzzer. He does buzzer workshops at trivia events. And then we also talk to Michael Harris, who enables the buzzer, and we talk about the rule that made the buzzer what it is today."

Occasionally, production pauses for rulings by the show's judges.

The "Jeopardy!" board. Eric McCandless via Getty Images via BI

Sometimes, a contestant will provide an answer that requires further deliberation, such as questionable pronunciation.

"There's a lot of traffic control stuff that good hosts make look easy," Cohen said. "I practiced a lot to make it as easy

as possible, but you don't really think about it when you're just watching the show."

The "Jeopardy!" alumni community is a close-knit group.

From left to right: "Jeopardy!" champions James Holzhauer, Ken Jennings, and Brad Rutter. Eric McCandless via Getty Images via BI

Nicknamed "Mr. Personality" by Alex Trebek, Cohen became known as a polarizing figure on the show for his tongue-in-cheek "Final Jeopardy!" answers referencing "SNL" skits. Other "Jeopardy!" contestants, such as 2018 Teen Tournament champion Claire Sattler and 40-game champion Amy Schneider, have spoken

out about experiencing online harassment after their appearances on “Jeopardy!”

Thankfully, Cohen says, the “Jeopardy!” alumni community is there for each other.

“The folks at ‘Jeopardy!’ really want the fans to respect the contestants,” Cohen said. “I’m glad this show is taking more of a forward approach, and I also love when my fellow contestants can jump in and kind of assemble the ‘Jeopardy!’ alum avengers to support our fellow contestants.”

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