

Why Labubu, Not Others?

— What This Pop Mart Phenomenon Tells Us About Emotional IPs

In the world of designer toys, Pop Mart has produced dozens of characters. From Dimoo to Skullpanda to Molly, the shelves are filled with endless expressions, costumes, and collectible boxes.

But among all of them, **only Labubu has truly exploded.**

Lines around the block.

Overnight camping.

One unit sold at auction for over **1.08 million RMB** (around \$150,000 USD).

Why?

1. Labubu doesn't ask to be liked — and that's why it is.

Let's be honest: most collectibles are cute.

They're symmetrical. Soft-edged. Glossy-eyed.

They're designed to please.

But **Labubu is different.**

It's not always "pretty." Its sharp teeth, wild fur, odd proportions — they're deliberately strange.

And that strangeness is exactly what gives it power.

There's a kind of raw, misunderstood melancholy in Labubu's face that feels more honest than adorable. It's not asking for approval. It's just being.

In a world of carefully filtered personalities, Labubu's rawness is a relief.

2. It taps into a specific emotional texture.

Not joy. Not sadness.

Whimsy, defiance, vulnerability — all at once.

Characters like Labubu don't just look different — they feel different. They invite projection.

They open emotional space.

That's the hallmark of strong IP:

Characters that don't just carry stories, but hold emotion.

3. It came with a story-first, merch-second attitude.

Pop Mart didn't just shove Labubu onto shelves.

It gave the character a universe — **The Monsters** — filled with companions, backstories, and moods.

People weren't buying toys.

They were buying entry into a feeling.

Compare that with some other Pop Mart releases that felt more like “themes with faces.” Those may sell for a season — but they rarely stick.

What This Means for Indie Creators

I've been building my own small IP lately — Una, a soft, thoughtful, lavender-colored cat-girl who listens to people's stories and quietly reflects their emotions. She's not loud. She's not flashy. But she's deeply present.

Watching Labubu reminds me:

You don't need to chase universal appeal.

You just need to strike one clear emotional chord — and strike it well.

Labubu is proof that **emotional specificity outperforms generic cuteness**.

What I'm Learning at UnaBra

At UnaBra, I'm not just building a brand — I'm building a character who can hold space for people.

That means designing with feeling, not just trend.

Listening before creating.

Letting the “weird” and “soft” be part of the DNA — not something to optimize away.

In short:

Labubu works because it's not trying to work.

That's the lesson I'm carrying into Una.