

# FAIR PLAY



**JOHN DIMAGGIO**  
Voice Actor



## By Alan Shires

Voice Actor and VON Business Development Manager



**John DiMaggio**  
@TheJohnDiMaggio

Hi, I've been thinking about everything that's been going on these past months and just to be clear, I don't think that only I deserve to be paid more. I think the entire cast does. Negotiations are a natural part of working in show business. Everyone has a different strategy & different boundaries. Their "price." Some accept offers, some hold their ground. Bender is part of my soul & nothing about this is meant to be disrespectful to the fans or my Futurama family. It's about self-respect. And honestly, being tired of an industry that's become far too corporate and takes advantage of artist's time & talent. Look, I wish I could give you every detail so you would understand, but it's not my place. Thanks again for the love everyone. Still hoping for the best. In the meantime I'll be in New Orleans shooting Interview With A Vampire for AMC - and very grateful to be! Thanks...



**W**ithin our industry most people would agree that The Simpsons is certainly one of the top shows ever made. The creator of The Simpsons, Matt Groening, later brought out another show called Futurama which shared much of the same success as its predecessor. Futurama ran for four seasons ending in 2003 on the Fox network. Later, in 2010 through to 2013, Comedy Central reprised the show bringing out new episodes and content. Now, 19 years since the end of the series on Fox, Hulu are looking at reprising the show once more and have announced much of the former cast will be returning to the screen.

As the weeks passed it became more apparent that one huge factor would potentially be missing from the show's return, and that was the absence of John DiMaggio from the cast list. DiMaggio successfully played and delivered on the iconic lead role of the robot 'Bender' throughout the show's existence and that left a large gap in its return; the show would be missing its lead voice actor.

It then emerged that in late 2021, the rates offered to the cast by Hulu were 'lowballing' the actors. DiMaggio allegedly offered a counter proposal at a more industry standard and competitive level. From that point talks appeared to have ended between DiMaggio and Hulu.

DiMaggio promised to keep fans and followers updated, and tweeted on occasions. Multiple publications suggested DiMaggio simply wanted more money to reprise the role, but in one Tweet he shared that he felt the entire cast deserved more money, not just him. He went on to share that the fundamental root of his issue was that the industry itself was disparaging the performers by taking advantage of them. Cautiously, DiMaggio did not give away much more

in his Tweet but we can use our own observations to identify that the industry is on a weak footing when it comes to appropriate rates and fair treatment.

Hulu later announced that, should DiMaggio decide not to return to the show, the role of Bender would be recast. This caused outrage amongst peers and fans alike, who stated they would not watch the show and that talent cannot simply be replaced. Thousands of artists, including fellow cast members from the show, came out in support of DiMaggio. It also impacted voiceover artists from

other hit shows, such as Sean Schemmel, the lead in Dragon Ball Z; his response, showing support, can be viewed on the replies to DiMaggio's February 16th Tweet.

**Through honest conversation, commitment and conviction, John DiMaggio was able to challenge, educate and convince Hulu that standards needed to be higher.**

It would have been easy for DiMaggio to have conformed to the demands in front of him and continue playing a character he loves. However, fighting against lowballing and standing up for fair rates not only benefited his own career but elevated voice actors worldwide. He has become an industry pillar not only for his amazing talent as a voice over artist but as a symbol of strength and commitment. His perseverance paid off as Hulu recently confirmed that DiMaggio will be returning to the show.

Through honest conversation, commitment and conviction, John DiMaggio was able to challenge, educate and convince Hulu that standards needed to be higher. Hulu have bettered themselves by working more closely with the cast and listening not only to the industry, but to their fan base as well. This goes to show that when one person steps out against an injustice others will follow. It has been a beautiful reflection of actors coming together, fans backing them and channels changing their behaviours to better the industry.