

All Dolled Up to Go to Court

By Reg P. Wydeven
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When I was a kid, I lived for Saturday mornings. My dad, my sister and I would get up early and watch cartoons. We'd watch Batman, Superman, Spiderman, Scooby-Doo, and Tom and Jerry. Some things never change.

Now, I still love Saturday mornings. My kids and I get up early and strangely enough, we watch Batman, Superman, Spiderman, Scooby-Doo, and Tom and Jerry. One show we don't watch, however, is the Bratz.

From what I can gather, the Bratz is basically an animated version of an MTV reality show. It features a group of spoiled, sassy girls who focus on fashion and boys. Thankfully my daughter isn't interested, but she is apparently the only one.

Since their unveiling in 2001, the Bratz have been a smashing success. The Bratz are everywhere – there's the tv show, tons of dolls with clothes and accessories, and oodles of other merchandise. That's why Mattel, Inc. sued Bratz' creator Carter Bryant and his employer MGA Entertainment Inc., claiming it owns the rights to the dolls.

The toy giant filed a federal trademark infringement suit in a California U.S. District Court. According to court documents, Bryant made Bratz drawings and models while he was under contract with Mattel as a Barbie designer. Accordingly, the company claims it owns the rights to the dolls.

To make matters worse, Mattel is alleging that Bryant "went Enron" and erased files – possibly containing drawings of the dolls or emails with MGA – from his computer two days prior to surrendering it as evidence for the trial. While Bryant contends he was trying to get rid of sexually explicit pop-up ads, Mattel is wary seeing as he used a program called Evidence eliminator, which is touted as a security utility that uses "secure deletion processes similar to US Government Military Standards."

MGA founder and Chief Executive Isaac Larian testified that his company was not trying to bury Bryant's involvement with the Bratz and his background with Mattel. He also denied Mattel's claim that his company stole the Bratz concept.

Based on this experience, Mattel is purportedly releasing a Litigation Barbie.