

Nerd is the Word

By Reg P. Wydeven
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When my wife agreed to marry me, she knew she was going to be stuck with a nerd for the rest of her life. Unfortunately, instead of her coolness rubbing off on me, my nerdliness rubbed off on her.

In 2003, she actually agreed to go with me to Star Wars Celebration II, a Star Wars convention held in Indianapolis. There were booths featuring Star Wars licensees, workshops featuring authors of Star Wars novels and comic books, interviews with the stars of Star Wars, and sneak peeks at scenes from Episode II: Attack of the Clones.

Tens of thousands of nerds, many dressed like characters from the movies, were crammed into the convention center for the three-day weekend. Security for the convention was provided by the dedicated members of the 501st Legion - a fun club whose members dress up like stormtroopers, clone troopers and other bad guys from the Star Wars saga.

There are thousands of members of the 501st across the globe, and many of them have made their own costumes. Others, though, have purchased their suits of armor. Some purchased their costumes from the British company Shepperton Design Studios, a company George Lucas feels is more evil than Darth Vader.

George Lucas' production company, Lucasfilm Ltd., sued Shepperton in federal court for copyright and trademark infringement and unfair competition. Shepperton had been marketing unlicensed stormtrooper helmets and costumes and TIE fighter pilot helmets depicted in the Star Wars films.

The judge agreed that Shepperton had infringed, and awarded Lucasfilm \$20 million in damages, and further permanently barred Shepperton from copying, reproducing, importing, licensing, marketing or displaying any of its unauthorized Star Wars products in the U.S. Lucasfilm is now pursuing legal action against Shepperton in the U.K. to enforce the judgment there.

Lucasfilm encourages Star Wars fans to make their own costumes for personal use and enjoyment, however, the company vigorously pursues anyone who tries to profit from using its copyrights and trademarks without authorization.

For me and most of my fellow nerds, our fixation with Star Wars is just harmless fun. Unfortunately, some nerds' fanaticisms go too far. James Flemons was obsessed with the fantasy roleplaying game Dungeons & Dragons. Commonly called D&D (or so I've been told) the game allows players to create characters like knights or sorcerers that use dice to combat goblins and dragons.

Flemons is now using his D&D obsession as a defense in his murder trial. James Flemons was charged with murder in Detroit after he walked into his place of work, Peerless Metal Powders & Abrasive, and slashed his co-worker, Anthony Williams, with his homemade samurai sword.

According to witnesses, Flemons challenged Williams to a duel and then chased him before stabbing him to death. After the killing, Flemons purported bought a beer and cigar at a nearby convenience store and then returned to the scene and positioned Williams' body as if on a cross. He then he opened the beer and lit the cigar as he waited for the police to arrive.

Though he was deemed competent to stand trial, Flemons and his attorney are hoping a jury will find him not guilty by reason of insanity and send him to a state mental health facility.

Flemons' trial is expected to last five days and will be aired live on Court TV Extra.

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