

The AFO Experience

“Swords of Orlandia”

■ *By Christina Leung*



Attendee Carmina and I at the dealer's room



AFO Cosplayer and I

AFO stands for “Anime Festival Orlando,” which took place on August 3rd-5th 2007 at the Wyndham Orlando Resort. This year marks their 8th convention and the theme was “Swords of Orlandia” which is based on popular video games such as Final Fantasy and Legend of Zelda.



Attendees playing in the game room

This was the first time I went to an anime convention. I was given the opportunity to invite one friend, so I asked my classmate, Krystina Ramos, to join me in this exciting experience. We were dropped off at the Wyndham Orlando Resort, and once we entered we knew we were in a totally different environment. People who dress up as a certain character were called Cosplayers, and believe me...they were EVERYWHERE. Most of the costumes we saw were identical to the actual character they were cosplaying as. Some were amazing and some were a bit...disturbing, but I guess the thing that matters most is how much passion you have for anime.

One person that stood out the most was Patrick Taylor who held up a sign that said “Naruto Sucks.” Naruto is a very popular manga and television series that is watched by all ages, so automatically eyes were drawn to the guy who held up the sign. I had no clue what Naruto was about. Krystina and I approached him asking him his opinion about Naruto. According to him, “Naruto is worse than Inuyasha (another popular anime/television series); it’s completely stupid.” While writing down what he said, two other guys come up opposing Taylor’s thoughts. It ended up turning into this huge debate, and to me, that was what passion for anime was all about.

The first event I went to was called “Hap-

py Happy Cosplay Go! Go! Go!” This event reminded me of the show “American Idol” for various reasons. 1) The hilarious hosts and judges, 2) the audience participation throughout each performance, and 3) the fact that this is a LIVE contest where judges comment on your performance. This event would have to be the best thing out of the whole entire convention. The four judges made me laugh throughout the whole show. For example, one of the judges wrote down on their whiteboard “HOMO!” and pointed it to the other judge next to them.

The rest of the events in general was okay to watch. However, the last performance made up for the lack of excitement. A man dressed up as Kakashi Hatake (a Naruto character) break danced as his talent, and that just got the crowd WILD. He ended up winning best in show. Go figure. But the ULTIMATE shock was a sudden marriage proposal! It was beautiful, this guy brought up his girlfriend and started to share his personal past experience about participating in anime conventions, and then he brought out a ring box, got on one knee, and asked his girlfriend to marry him. It was something to remember.

The last event I went to was “The Royal Formal Ball” which actually required you to dress up or else you wouldn’t be allowed to enter. Spending at least an hour and a half in that room got me a bit bored. Krystina and I

tried dancing to the jazz music they had playing, but it didn’t really work out. In Krystina’s opinion “there was no energy in that room” but it was a royal formal ball, so it had to be classy, hence the jazz music. But that was only because there weren’t a lot of people if you compare it to a high school homecoming dance. The formal ball could at least have had alternate genres of music to keep people dancing at different beats.

Overall, the Anime Festival Orlando had its pros and cons. Would I recommend people to go? Yes I would. Even though I didn’t have the greatest time at the royal ball, I did enjoy seeing a lot of Anime merchandises and social activities. Actually, when Krystina and I thought about the entire evening, we came to the conclusion that we would have had fun at the royal ball if we brought along a bigger group of friends with us, because with a lot of friends you are comfortable with you can find fun in just about anything. I would like to thank AFO for giving me this amazing, first time anime convention experience, and I hope to come back next time! **ATM**



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