

# **COSPLAY INTERVIEW – FAMILY OF 4 COSPLAY**

*For: Project Grumpy Gaming ([www.projectgrumpygaming.com](http://www.projectgrumpygaming.com))*

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/Familyof4Cosplay>

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Family of 4 Cosplay are definitely my favourite cosplay family. With a clear mindset, and awesome attitude, Anam Stubbington makes wonders to enjoy this creative hobby with her family. They have a huge theme variety, and impeccable results. Also, they are so open with everyone, always ready to answer your questions or doubts, or just ready to be charming and amazing. A truly inspiration for those who want to come to the cosplay world, thank you so much for answering this questions!

**How did you experienced the transition from being part of the fan base of cosplaying to be cosplayers yourselves? How much time passed during this transition?**

We have always been fans – my husband has a Star Trek uniform that is 24 years old – but either we´ve been working or our girls were very young. Doing anything with young children is not the easiest. And also we have always lived far away from where conventions happened.

To be honest, it was moving to Barcelona that helped us make the move from convention attendees to cosplayers. Our children were old enough to last longer than a couple of hours. We started with the EuroSteamcon event, as a bet from a friend who said that I could make some basic cosplays in two weeks, so we could attend. And it kind of snowballed from there. Now its three years later and I average 16 new cosplays a year (4 people x 4 events)

**Were you making cosplays on your own at first or did you introduced your daughters since the beginning?**

Actually I started making costumes for my kids for Halloween since they were little – Dragons, Spiders, Jellyfish... I then progressed to the grownups for parties. But when we decided to cosplay at conventions, we made a conscious decision to go as a family.

**How do you decide which cosplays to make?**

Actually, it is our children that decide 90% of everything. Each kid gets to choose a theme each year – one per year. But it has to be something that everyone in the family has seen/watched/played/or read and it has to be age appropriate – so no Assassins Creed for my kid yet even though she wants to play it so much. They then have to give me a project page of the theme, who they think each person in the family should be, how props could be made and they have to google me some images. 2 per character for the youngest, 10 per character for the oldest. This means they have to do the research and shows they really want to do it. It also stops any silliness like working speeder bikes and flamethrowing weapons. One parent must match a child, so ShaakTi & Ashoka, Stoick

& Hiccup, Tibbers & Annie etc this helped cement it as a group theme, not just random characters from a movie.

Our staples every year are Star Wars and Studio Ghibli – after that we work around the kids, our friends and sometimes just plain wants

### **How deeply do you get into character?**

We try to move the children towards characters they would be naturally as kids don't have a long attention span. Its much easier for an introvert to play an extrovert – which is why my youngest loves Harley Quinn and my Oldest love being Sabine Wren where she can hide inside her helmet. My husband likes characters where he does not have to do much talking.

We try and find characters that match our personality and body shapes because it's just easier to not have to remember to get into character when you are also wondering if the children need the toilet or more food or if they are getting too hot, stressed etc. I try very hard to match the characters costume wise but I don't worry about wigs for the kids, or contact lenses – that sort of thing is too much for us. And honestly we're too old to care about that level of perfection.

### **How do you organize yourself when you work on the cosplays?**

Hahahahahah actually I've finally figured out a system that works for me. I use big plastic boxes and fabric shopping bags. I gather all the possible things I would use for a character into a fabric bag, then all the bags for that group go into one box. Then I can pull out each bag as I go. It also helps reduce the mess I create when I work. As that drives my husband mad.

I use a lot of visual boards to keep me focused. But I tend to work in bursts – 8 hours one day, nothing for two days, then other burst. It evens out by the end though. We have a really tight budget for each cosplay – 50€ per event (plus one photoshoot) - unless it is a forever cosplay like Ian's Tusken or Fay's Sabine where they are going to wear it for more than 2 years (6 events). Then we increase the budget to be 50€ per event so if they would do 4 events – then the budget is €200. Too many people think cosplay is going to be really expensive but it doesn't have to be if you compromise and do all the work yourself.

€50 is a new pair of shoes or these days, a tshirt nearly. I sometimes do trades with friends for help with a specific part – like the pneumatic motor for Fay's steampunk wings. I am thankful for Encants markets for all my fabric. But this does mean our cosplays may not be exactly perfect to the official image but for the 5 foot rule, it looks good – that's the rule we use that if someone is 5 feet away (1.5 meters) do you look close enough to the real thing. I plan all our cosplays over the Christmas holidays for the majority of the coming year so we can order wigs and start special items early enough to not be rushed.

### **There's so many parents that don't like this kind of hobbies for their children, but you're such an open-minded family, how does your girls feel about that?**

We are all gamers so it gets us out of the house together. My girls currently think it is awesome. We enjoy it for what it is for us – a fun way of being together as a family.

As Fay hits teenager, I hope she still wants to take part but I would never demand it. Honestly, I often have this conversation with parents – I am 40 – i'm old enough to be the mother of some of my friends. I explain that cosplay is a mixed bag of skills – from learning how to deal with people, to learning to sew and create – but mainly it's a viable way to spend money – what would they rather - a kid who goes out and spends money on alcohol, drugs or such like – or one who is at home swearing at a cosplay part. If the kid has moved out of home, then the parent is crap out of luck on how the child spends their money.

I think a lot of parents don't see the end value of cosplay – they don't understand why its necessary to dress up like a pokemon or a game character. They are a different generation – they think differently. I often point out that if the parent had a chance to be like Jane Austen or Marie Antoinette or some other hero from their youth, would they do it. Most of them would like to experience that. Parents worry about their children ONLY focusing on cosplay, spending more money that is sensible, dropping out from school, friends, jobs etc – but that could be any hobby – football, movies etc

At the end of the day, if any hobby makes your kid or your friend happy and content – support them. The minute it starts being about popularity, or its takes up all their life, then maybe step in to get them to refocus.

The big thing I do worry about ,especially for my girls, is bullying and sexism – while every hobby has issues, with the culture of social media, instagram and 15 minutes of fame, I believe cosplaying has an extra edge to it. I think it is necessary to teach young cosplayers that Validation from social media likes, strangers on the internet etc will not last, doesn't buy you food and can in the end ruin your self esteem as you make choices as to what to wear/look like in order to be more popular. So many people today want to be famous – just be famous – without realising what that entails. Very few people make it as professional cosplayers and nearly all of them have other projects such as books, modelling, fashion design etc as well as often having the support of their parents or partners who have regular jobs.

It is hard for a lot of people to balance between wanting people to like your cosplay and only doing cosplay to be liked/popular. I have absolutely no issue with female cosplayers showing cleavage, or male cosplayers showing abs – once it's part of the characters look. I am tired of people turning a regular cosplay into something else to only show off cleavage in order to be popular. That said, I do have issues with male cosplayers who refuse to buy a dancers belt.

The bullying is more of a social issue – I get comments all the time about being a fat cosplayer. I happily point out to them that a) I don't need to be skinny to be loved for who I am. I have an awesome husband and great kids. and b) if that's all they have to complain about my cosplay, then it's a cosplay win. I get to stay home with my kids and make cosplays most of the time. I am happy.

I have a daughter hitting teenagedom and she has experienced sexist behaviour already at previous conventions. It sucks. I can only teach her how to respond and protect herself. I can call out the males on it but again, it's a social thing. If you are male and you see this behaviour, call it out – your voice is powerful and can help train the next generation of convention attendees to not be arseholes. Or I will just let Fay build her next prop with a built in tazer.

At the end of the day, cosplay is a hobby for 99% of us and we enjoy the process from planning, to completing the final last detail that no-one else will notice, to seeing the great photos by awesome photographers.

**If you had to think of the most positive thing about cosplaying, what would it be?**

It allows people to be creative, to be someone else for a day and to share their enjoyment of being part of a fanbase. Meeting people who are as nerdy and geeky about what you love is an awesome experience. Seeing the faces of people who recognise your character and the kids who give you a big smile. Its all good.

**Which cosplay is your favourite one individually?**

Gah! Personally I love my ShaakTi – she is my all time favourite Star Wars Character. I put a lot of effort into my current cosplay (200+ hours) and I'm about to redo her again to make improvements. Most cosmakers love their latest cosplay, or a single part of a just completed cosplay – we are so focused on getting it finished that we only see the flaws when it is completed. I have a lot of friends who will tell you that they are still not happy with x part even though it is on the back where no one will see it. That is what we focus on.

The one I took the greatest pleasure in was the 7ft Tibbers (from league of legends) that I made my husband. For scale it was perfect with our youngest as Annie. It was the reaction from other people that was the best – to see people catch it from the corner of their eye and rush to get a better look.

To be honest, often it's the reaction of people to us as group that makes all the hours, cuts and failures worthwhile. When someone comes to you and says your cosplay is awesome. That is a good feeling. And that's why when I see other cosplays that I like, I make an effort to tell that person. It can make a difference, especially with new cosplayers.

**Do you have any cosplays plans for the future?**

Always. I have an ongoing list of cosplays – outside of the regular ones for each year, I have a list of cosplays that I want to make if we ever get specific events – like Journey; a list of ones I want to make if I ever win the lottery – Pixar, 40K ; and ones that I want to make just for fun for the family – Big Hero 6. All those are down to money more than anything.

For 2016 – we are planning new group cosplays for Avengers, Rise of the Guardians, Harry Potter, and Adventure Time. We are attending Star Wars Celebration on London this year so we will be reworking cosplays for that too.

Thank you for all the questions. I could talk for hours and hours. I just wanted to say that if a newbie cosplayer wants to get in touch for advice, talk to me. Talk to any of the cosplayers, most will give you advice and encouragement. Don't ever feel that you are on your own. We all have failures, cosplays half finished in our supplies, we have all bought the wrong fabric once, cut the wrong pattern, cried over a part, never found the

reference photo of that piece and made it up... Talk to us at events but remember we are human too.