

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
ATLANTA DIVISION

STRIKE 3 HOLDINGS, LLC,

Plaintiff,

v.

JOHN DOE subscriber assigned IP address
71.59.3.125,

Defendant.

Civil Action No.
1:23-cv-02096-SDG

STRIKE 3 HOLDINGS, LLC,

Plaintiff,

v.

JOHN DOE subscriber assigned IP address
73.137.105.62,

Defendant.

Civil Action No.
1:23-cv-02098-SDG

STRIKE 3 HOLDINGS, LLC,

Plaintiff,

v.

JOHN DOE subscriber assigned IP address
24.240.23.76,

Defendant.

Civil Action No.
1:23-cv-02099-SDG

STRIKE 3 HOLDINGS, LLC,

Plaintiff,

v.

JOHN DOE subscriber assigned IP address
73.237.242.170,

Defendant.

Civil Action No.
1:23-cv-02100-SDG

STRIKE 3 HOLDINGS, LLC,

Plaintiff,

v.

JOHN DOE subscriber assigned IP address
73.137.234.124,

Defendant.

Civil Action No.
1:23-cv-02102-SDG

STRIKE 3 HOLDINGS, LLC,

Plaintiff,

v.

JOHN DOE subscriber assigned IP address
73.184.211.143,

Defendant.

Civil Action No.
1:23-cv-02103-SDG

OPINION & ORDER

This matter is before the Court on Plaintiff Strike 3 Holdings, LLC's (Strike 3) motions to serve subpoenas on multiple Defendants pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 45 in the above-captioned cases [1:23-cv-02096-SDG, ECF 6; 1:23-cv-02098-SDG, ECF 6; 1:23-cv-02099-SDG, ECF 6; 1:23-cv-02100-SDG, ECF 6; 1:23-cv-02100-SDG, ECF 6; 1:23-cv-02103-SDG, ECF 6]. For the reasons that follow, the motions to serve subpoenas are **GRANTED**. The application for admission *pro hac vice* is **DENIED as moot**. See ECF 9.

I. Background

The facts underpinning these cases are essentially the same.¹ Strike 3 owns a library of adult motion pictures, dozens of which the John Doe Defendants allegedly copied and reproduced, infringing on Strike 3's copyrights.² According to Strike 3, these motion pictures are "award-winning," "critically acclaimed," "high-end," "artistic," and "performer-inspiring" owing to their "Hollywood[-]style budget and quality."³ Apparently, quality begets viewership: Strike 3's subscription-based websites boast a subscriber base that is purportedly one of the highest of any adult content website.⁴ It also invites rampant infringement, evidenced by Strike 3's content allegedly "appearing among the most infringed popular entertainment content on torrent websites."⁵ Because of Defendants and

¹ For this reason, the court refers only to documents from the case filed first in time, 1:23-cv-02096-SDG.

² ECF 1, ¶¶ 1-4.

³ *Id.* ¶ 3.

⁴ *Id.* ¶ 13.

⁵ *Id.* ¶ 16.

other alleged pirates, “Strike 3’s motion pictures are among the most pirated content in the world.”⁶

Strike 3 maintains that Defendants “not only engage in illegal downloading, but are also large[-]scale unauthorized distributors of Strike 3’s content.”⁷ They are as yet unidentified because they cloaked their identities to evade detection. But, Strike 3 reasons, Defendants’ internet providers might be able to identify Defendants through their IP addresses, which Strike 3 uncovered using third-party geolocation technology and their own proprietary infringement detection system.⁸ For this reason, Strike 3 filed its many motions to serve Fed. R. Civ. P. 45 subpoenas on Defendants.

II. Discussion

A. Fictitious Party Pleading

Although fictitious party practice is not ordinarily allowed in federal court, *Richardson v. Johnson*, 598 F.3d 734, 738 (11th Cir. 2010), the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals recognizes an exception when “the plaintiff’s description of the defendant is so specific as to be ‘at the very worst, surplusage.’” *Id.* (citation

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ ECF 6-1, at 5 (citation omitted).

⁸ ECF 1, ¶¶ 5, 9, 27–28.

omitted). This exception has been applied by courts in this Circuit, as in other Circuits, to allow fictitious party pleading where discovery is necessary to determine a defendant's true identity. *See, e.g., Roe v. Doe*, 2019 WL 13215281, at *1 (N.D. Ga. Oct. 10, 2019) (finding fictitious party pleading was acceptable and authorizing limited discovery where defendants allegedly used false names and email accounts and could only be identified by those names and accounts).

Strike 3 has sufficiently identified Defendants by their IP addresses – unique electronic signatures assigned to devices allegedly used by the infringers to pirate Strike 3's property. *See, e.g., Breaking Glass Pictures, LLC v. Doe*, 2013 WL 8336085, at *5 (N.D. Ga. Apr. 12, 2013) (granting preliminary discovery where the plaintiff only knew the defendant's IP address and sought leave to serve a subpoena based on this information to uncover the defendant's identity). Without limited discovery, Strike 3 would be precluded from pursuing its claims and obtaining judicial relief related to the alleged infringement. Thus, in this case, the Court finds that fictitious party pleading is warranted and excepted from the general prohibition.

B. Early Discovery Under Rule 26(d)(1)

Under Rule 26(d)(1) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, “[a] party may not seek discovery from any source before the parties have conferred as required

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