

The art of cosplay



Imagine one day you're strolling down the street in a hustling, bustling big city like Atlanta. You round the corner of the sidewalk when you brush into somebody. As you stare in slight confusion, a variety of color, elaborate designs, and accessories on the other person's body alarms you. Quickly, you take out your cell phone and check the date. Could it be Halloween? You're even more confused when you realize that it's in the middle of summer. Have you tumbled into some parallel universe where people dress in strange elaborate costumes? Is there some sort of festival going on nearby? No, not quite. You've just stumbled, quite literally, into an performing art that had been around for over fifty years and is renowned for its history, costume designs, creative construction, and contests.

Cosplay is a performance art in which participants create elaborate costumes and accessories based off of a specific character. Where on earth did the strange fascinating term Cosplay come from? According to CosMode by Editors of Broccoli Books, the origin of the term cosplay came from Nov Takahashi in 1984. While he was visiting his first Cosplay convention called Comic Con. He was so impressed by the costumes and the hard work of the costume designers that he frequently reported about it in online articles, and referred to the event as a Cosplay convention.

Where did Cosplay originate? Because of its nature, many people believe that Cosplay came from Japan. Unfortunately, there is no known source of where Cosplay originally started. However, despite the fact that Cosplay wasn't invented within Japan, it is impeccable to say that the Japanese have been heavily influenced by Cosplay. A good example would be Japan's Harajuku station, which is famous for its large number of Cosplay cafes.

Within these cafes are waitresses and waiters who are dressed up in costume, serving you breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Where did the ideas for Cosplay costumes come from? Cosplay costumes are based off of specific characters found in mangas, which are Japanese comic books (Bring Book and Hold it up to Show) anime, which is Japanese animation. (Bring Spirited Away DVD Hold it up to Show) Or video game characters (Bring Vincent V, and Sephiroth figures, hold them up and show). Cosplay isn't just subjective towards Japanese based productions. Recently in the past several years' people have been cosplaying movies like Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, and The Matrix

Many people make the assumption that Cosplay is a form of Halloween; I assure you it is nothing of the sort. Halloween costumes are purchased over the internet, made of horrible material that is easily stained, ripped, and ruined. Cosplay designers spend years perfecting their costumes, getting every detail imaginable. There are many different techniques into making a perfect Cosplay costume. Many designers don't have sewing patterns to go by, therefore; we tend to get newspapers and create our own. Sewing is the easiest and effective way to make a Cosplay Costume. A prime example of this would be my own Cosplay Costume (Pull Costume out of the Box, and hold up material, and then pass picture around) According to Everybody Cosplays written by Jan Kurotaki a good Cosplay costume will take a little over a year to make. This costume was no exception. It took me a year and a half to make, and is still a working progress because of the prop that goes with it.

Cosplaying isn't for the weak, lazy, or unimaginative. If you thought making just the clothing was hard, try and make a weapon or accessories that go along with your character! For example the girl I have cosplayed as, is holding a staff, which looks relatively simple to make. But try to imagine it from a cosplayer's point of view. The staff needs to be lightweight, because you will be carrying it around all day for the duration of the convention or contest. It needs to be flexible, but not brittle or else it shall break. Then you have to fit the weapon to your own body size and estimate the weight, size, and height. Also you need to take into the count if the weapon is mobile, because some conventions require you to get into elevators, and it won't do any good if the weapon is too big to fit inside.

The big question is why go through some much trouble in making a costume? The answer can be summed up into two words: Cosplay Contest. Every year thousands of conventions hold contest celebrating the dedication, hard work, and inventive ways of designers in Cosplay Contest. The Cosplayers will go before a panel of judges and be judged on overall appearance, material used, and how the props/accessories are designed. Cosplay contest are very stressful. You can practically feel the tension backstage when you are waiting to go on stage and perform for the judges.

The next time you find yourself hustling in a big city like Atlanta, and you see a person walking down the street in rather colorful, questionable clothing attire remember this. Chances are they're not crazy, homeless, or lost and confused. They're just participating in a performing art that had been a part of our culture and many others. Maybe the second time you have a run-in with a Cosplayers you won't shun away from them in disgust or confusion.

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Maybe, you'll watch them for a bit, and follow them. Soon before you know it, you're at the convention itself, surrounded by Cosplayers of every shape, size, and color, and age. Welcome to the Art of Cosplay.