

SUMMER ISSUE! • FREE DIY TEMPLATES INSIDE



COSPLAY CULTURE



Stella Chu

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

SUMMER CON COVERAGE
MEGACON, COLOSSALCON, A-KON

ACROBATICA INFINITI
CIRCUS WITH A COSPLAY TWIST

INTERNATIONAL COSPLAY
LONDON CON

September/November 2017

WORDUP PRESENTS

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editor's letter



When we first decided to create an issue celebrating anime and its influences on cosplay, we quickly realized that to do such a concept justice would take a year's worth of issues devoted to that single theme. We don't have to tell you that the moniker of "anime" is now just too broad a term and encompasses far too many subgenres to fully explore in a single issue.


However, no need to fret, we didn't entirely abandon our original concept — we did a bit of readjusting instead, and we're sure you'll be pleased with the results.

Our first decision was to request the honor of having Stella Chuu grace our cover, and we were ecstatic when she agreed. Our excitement over Stella was not only her high profile anime cosplay persona, but also her ongoing message of "body positivity". As Stella herself tells Rich Kirby in his exclusive interview, "I want to make being sexy the norm," and she means that for women (and men) of all shapes and sizes. Check out Stella's "poppy" layout shot by photographer Steve Prue.

Befitting the anime theme, we hit two of the longest running anime cons in the United States — A-Kon, which held its first event in 1990, and Anime Central, where we were invited to cover the event as it celebrated its 20th anniversary. Other cons we had the pleasure of attending recently were Anime St. Louis and the awesomely wacky water themed Colossal Con in Ohio.

We can go on and on between the DIY's, cosplayer profiles, international conventions, a cosplay circus, and tons more in this issue, but it's time we let you get on with the "show" that's waiting for you just beyond this page!

So, Dye. Cut. Sew. Glue. Have fun!
The Editors

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Steve Prue



Jason Laboy is a portrait/editorial photographer based in Bronx, NY. Jason took his passion for photography to the convention scene 2 years ago and he has quickly established himself as one of the most sought-after photographers in the Cosplay community. Jason has the knack for turning the mundane into the mesmerizing.



Alan Scholting of Synester Saints Ent. is a true fanboy turned professional, with over fifteen years of convention experience and multiple contacts in the entertainment world. As a columnist, he has had the pleasure of interviewing everyone from WWE superstars to living legends like Stan Lee. His writing has won several awards.



Steve Prue likes to go to interesting places, meet up with interesting people dressed up as interesting characters, and shoot them.



Mineralblu is a daily publication that covers all things nerd related, including movies, tv, comics, gaming, cosplay, anime, conventions, and much more.

Word Up! presents: Cosplay Culture #37 (ISSN 2380-2103) is published bi-monthly by Cosplay Culture in January, April, June, August, November. Contents copyrighted © 2016. All rights reserved. Periodicals postage paid at NYC and additional mailing offices. Postmaster please send address changes to COSPLAY CULTURE, 1411 Broadway #5, New York, NY 10018. Reproduction or use in any part of the contents without prior permission of the publisher is prohibited. Return postage must accompany all manuscripts, drawing or photographs. All manuscripts, drawing or photographs sent to Cosplay Culture will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication and copyright purposes and are subject to the magazine's right to edit and comment editorially. All photographs are posed for by professional models except as otherwise noted. Neither said photographs nor the editorial nor quotations accompany such photographs are to be construed as indication of the person's sexual orientation, conduct, personality, or actual quotation. Cosplay Culture assumes no responsibility for the advertisements made therein of the quality and deliverability of the products themselves. Cosplay Culture assumes no responsibility to determine whether the people whose photographs or statements appear in such advertisements have in fact endorsed such product or consented to the use of their names or photographs or the statements attributed to them. Contact us by mail at Cosplay Culture 1411 Broadway #5, New York NY 10018.

PRINTED IN USA

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London Con

Cosplay From Across The Pond

cosplay culture

WHEN THE REAL WORLD COLLIDES WITH COSPLAY, THE RESULT IS COSPLAY CULTURE! FROM MUSIC TO SPORTS, FROM FASHION TO TV AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN, YOU HAVE JUST LANDED IN THE COSPLAY CULTURE UNIVERSE.

Nº1

VIVA LAS VEGAS TURNS 20

Known as the world's largest Rockabilly event, Viva celebrated its 20th anniversary this year at the Orleans Hotel in Las Vegas. There was an unforgettable performance by burlesque superstar Dita Von Teese, a car show, and music all weekend long. Our favorite had to be the ultra glam 1950's pool party on Sunday!



Nº2

BLONDIE:
KING & QUEEN OF NYC'S MERMAID PARADE

Debbie Harry and Chris Stein of new wave band Blondie reigned supreme as King and Queen Neptune at the annual Coney Island Mermaid Parade. The rain did not stop the rockers from being wheeled in the traditional wicker chair, bringing an authentic New York City punk edge to the avant - garde event.



Nº3

DAPPER DAY – CELEBRATING REFINED STYLE

Elegant outings at Disney Land and more! Dapper Day celebrates vintage fashion and the art of dressing up at places like the Disney Parks as well as esteemed museums like LACAMA. Not sure what to wear? Dapper Day Expo happens each spring and fall at the Disneyland Hotel and features 30,000 sq ft. of vendors.

Nº4

STAN LEE <3'S COSPLAY CULTURE

Spotted: Stan Lee and his cover of Cosplay Culture magazine!
Cos Culture contributor Jason Laboy ran into Stan the man at Mega Con this year. How does he feel about his issue? We think his legendary smile says it all.



Nº5

SALEMS LOTT

Hollywood shock rockers SALEMS LOTT premiered an anime-style video for their new track "Enigma" off upcoming album Mask Of Morality, tackling themes of freedom of speech and individualism in a dystopian society. Mixing their heavy speed metal sound with shocking theatrics, the band has amassed fans from here to Japan with their musical antics. Check out the video, directed by Ian Moore and produced by UWOWI, at http://www.altpress.com/features/entry/salems_lott_enigma_music_video_premiere



Nº6

LULA ROE X DISNEY

Multi level marketing giant Lula Roe has dropped their much anticipated Disney collection. Lula is known for keeping their unique patterns a secret until the consultant puts them online for purchase. The new Disney patterns are creating quite a buzz and adding a whole new level to the Lula "unicorn" hunt.



HERO IN ME

Santana Cosplay and Cosplay's New Nerd Anthem

TEXT BY TIFFANY PEGRAM

Music that celebrates fandom has been around for decades, if not centuries. While these days the words "nerd rock" might immediately bring to mind artists like Kirby Krackle, Jonathan Coulton, and the Doubleclicks, there are other names you might know better that fall into that same category: They Might Be Giants, Weird Al Yankovic, and even Ben Folds Five. What really defines nerd rock, according to Kyle Stevens of Kirby Krackle in a 2013 Wired article, is "anything we are really passionate about, whether that be traditionally geeky subject matter or a song about how we're really into tacos. In essence, they're love songs directed to whatever we're really passionate about."*

Santana Maynard, AKA Santana Cosplay, has now joined those ranks of musicians singing about their passion with her new album, *Hero in Me*. A long-time musician who has been performing since she was a child and has opened in Nashville for country music artists like Brad Paisley, Santana admits to always having had a nerdy side. "I love a lot of things. I love traveling, I love conventions, I love cosplay and anime and video games. I'm passionate about all of it," she says. "This album is just the first time I've had a chance to make music about it." *Hero in Me* features several songs about nerdy staples, including the titular song about finding the heroic traits in yourself and the rocking "Gamer Boy" as well as our favorite track, "Cosplaying Just For Me."

"[Cosplaying Just For Me] is all about just doing what you love and not letting anyone tell you that you can't do it because you're the wrong size or color or gender or whatever," she says. "I've had friends who have been the target of hurtful comments like that, and it's so toxic, I just wanted to write a song that gives people who have experienced that the boost they need to keep doing the

things they love." Apparently that point of view is a popular one; when Santana and Flashbang Cosplay Capture decided to film the music video for the song at Katsucon 2017, everyone wanted in on the action, including well-known cosplayers like Yaya Han and Canvas Cosplay. We can't blame them; it's a great message of positivity. All lyrics in the album were written by Santana herself, and the music was put together by Ridgeline Productions (with special shoutouts to Jeff!) and recorded at Ocean Way studio in Nashville, TN. Check out Santana on YouTube at www.youtube.com/user/SantanaCosplay, or pick up a copy of *Hero in Me* at www.cdbaby.com/cd/santanacosplay.

*Selinker, Mike (2013-01-08). "Geek Love: Kirby Krackle, The Doubleclicks, and the soul of nerd rock". *Wired*.




COSPLAYER SPOTLIGHT

WITH SPECIAL GUEST: HIMEZAWA

Photography by Ishihara Shin





Sabrina “Himezawa” Schultes is a model, singer, and writer from Germany who lives in Tokyo, Japan. In addition to working as a professional cosplayer at events like Comiket and for costume companies such as Cosfit, she has taken part in the German Cosplay Championship and European Cosplay Gathering, and has appeared in various magazines in Germany, the UK, and Japan.

Sabrina has also been featured on TV Asahi, Abema TV and NTV Japan for her cosplay and idol work, and as a model, has done endorsements for multiple well-known publications. Live music appearances include performing at London Anime Con, Animuc Munich, MCM Expo London, Moshi Moshi Nippon Festival, and ANICRUSH!!! among many others.

Himezawa has somehow also found the time to write two novels, and is currently recording her debut album. We spoke with this multi-talent recently as she shared some insights into her career promoting and celebrating cosplay, Lolita fashion, anime, and all aspects of Japanese pop culture.

How did you get your start in cosplay? What was your first cosplay?

I started over 10 years ago and had a lot of help from friends and family in the beginning until I learned how to sew. Most of my friends who were into anime and manga also were into cosplay so they introduced me. My first cosplay would be either Kaitou Jeanne or Konata from Lucky Star!

How did you transition from amateur to professional cosplayer?

I got invited to London Anime & Gaming Con in 2013 when I was still living in Germany to give a panel on cosplay competitions and cosplay in Europe. After that I was lucky enough to move to London for studies and started performing and selling prints at events. I got scouted by a Japanese entertainment company/agency in 2014 and moved to Japan to work as a model and singer, which later gave me the chance to work as a cosplay model and performer.




What draws you to create a specific cosplay? Is it the costume design or the character?

I have some designs that I really like to sew. For example, I love making skirt and dress patterns for female characters, and I recently really got into makeup and wig styling. Sometimes friends ask me to join their group and I am usually left with 2 or 3 choices of characters. I would have to go for taller characters if in a group, as being 5' 7", I am usually the tallest in my friend circles (haha). When I go to an event alone or want to do a photoshoot/studio series, I go for a character that fits either my personality or ethnicity; i.e. I cosplay a lot of blonde characters, German and Russian characters.

Which cosplay characters have been your favorite or turned out the best?

I really loved Elisabeth von Wettin (Sound Horizon, Märchen) which was the first full dress I made; it took me several months to get it right. Another one I really liked on me was Makoto Kikuchi (The Idolmaster).





Which countries have been the most receptive or supportive of your work? What are the biggest differences among conventions in Germany, Japan, or Europe?

I get a lot of positive feedback at events in Japan, and I'm really thankful for that. The level of skill and the material available for cosplayers in Japan is on a whole different level from the west. I am really glad when I can meet the standards somehow.

Europe is a whole lot more relaxed in general, though the pressure at competitions and performances is higher in my opinion.

What's been the biggest challenge for you?

Contact lenses. I have never worn colored contacts until a year ago and it was a long and hard struggle to get started. To be honest, I am still scared every time I have to put in contact lenses (haha). Another struggle is always finding time. I am really busy in my life right now so I rarely have time to work on my own costumes anymore. Luckily my agency is very supportive and tailors costumes for me under supervision or on request when I'm too busy.

What characters are you thinking of working on in the future?

I am currently working on Slaine (Aldnoah Zero) and Hisomu (Kiznaiver) for this summer's Comiket. There are some bigger projects I've been wanting to take on, like Tracer (Overwatch) and Haine (Shinshi Doumei Cross Artbook), but haven't had the time yet to work out the details.

What advice would you give to those who are just starting out?

Have fun. When you first start to cosplay it might seem overwhelming how many ways there are to go about it, and especially in the west the gap between "just for fun" and "performance and elite" seems super big, but everyone starts somewhere. Nothing will ever be perfect, so just have fun, make friends, and learn as you go along!

More info on Himezawa's work can be found at <http://himezawa.co.uk>
as well as at <http://worldcosplay.net/member/himezawa>
<http://youtube.com/himezawako>
<http://himezawa.com>
<http://instagram.com/himezawa>



Posable Foam Feather DIY

ORIGINAL DESIGN BY CAMI ROEBUCK CREATIVE AND THE MHC WORKSHOP



Nº1

Measure feather out to desired length. An average feather is approximately 8 1/2"-9" (20.32 cm to 24.13 cm) long. Once you have measured out the length of your feather, mark the height with a pencil or chalk and then sketch out the shape of your feather. Note, feathers are generally rounded at one end, and taper to a point at the opposite end. With your scissors, cut out your shape once sketched.

MATERIALS

Craft Foam (*thin gauge*)*

Scissors

Pencil or Chalk

A ruler

Razor blade/X-Acto Knife

Hot glue gun

Acrylic paint (*same color as your foam*)

Paint brushes

Iridescent pigments (*Pearl Ex was used here*)

Mod Podge (*specifically the glossy kind*)

Thin jewelry wire

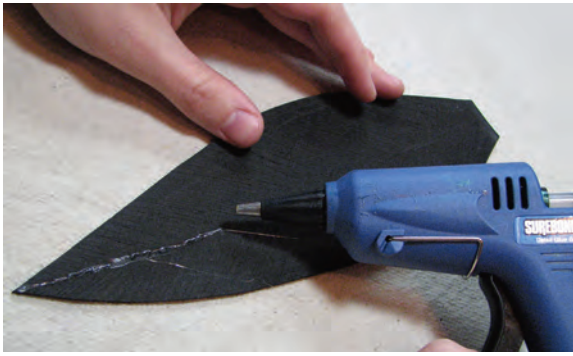
Wire cutters



Nº2

Once you have your feather shape cut out, it's time to start putting in details. Take your razor blade or X-Acto knife and score a line down the center of the feather from top to bottom. This line will serve as a guide for the spine of your feather so we'll be coming back to this. Until then, begin scoring lines onto your feather on both sides of the center mark. These lines will start at the center line and go down at an angle toward the tapered end of the feather. Make these lines all the way down both the left and right sides of the feather.

***Note:** Preferably use foam that is the same color as the type of feather you're looking to make. In this tutorial, we're making crow/raven feathers.



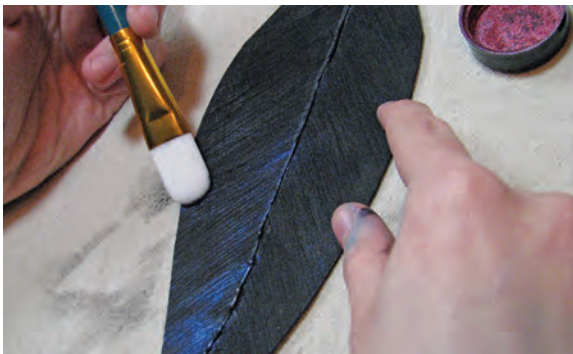
Nº3

Now that the feather is scored it's time to make the three dimensional spine. Take your hot glue gun and starting from one end or the other, follow the center mark you made all the way up or down leaving a line of hot glue. This replicates the spine of a feather.



Nº4

Once the hot glue has cooled, take your acrylic paint and give your feather a light coat, covering the hot glue spine you just made. Make sure to go along the grain of the marks you made down the feather. Allow this to dry.



Nº5

Now it's time to lay in the first layer of iridescent pigments. The colors in this tutorial are those typically seen in crow/raven feathers. You can use whatever colors suit your needs, but make sure you pick one color to be your base color and start with that one. Using one of your paint brushes, lightly streak the pigments on and blend out.



Nº6

Next give your feather a light coat of the gloss Mod Podge, painting it on from the spine and outward and allow to dry. Don't panic when this mutes the brightness of the iridescent pigments! That's okay!



Nº7

Now, for the second layer of iridescent pigments. Apply this coat the same way as the first one. Note, due to the stickiness of the Mod Podge, you'll have to do a little extra brush work to blend out the pigments.



N°8

Once you have all the colors on the way you want them, it's time to make your feather more feathery! Take your scissors and start cutting at the edge of your feather. *(Go with the grain of your scoring)* And don't be afraid when making slices! Cut up the spine, take out small chunks, etc. This mimics the separation you see in real feathers so the more you slice, the more realistic your feather will look.



N°9

Once you are satisfied with the overall appearance of your feather, let's make it bend! This step is not mandatory, but helpful if you need your feathers to sit a certain way. Take your feather and turn it over so the back side is facing upward. Now, get your thin jewelry wire and measure it from the top to the bottom of your feather and cut this length.



N°10

Once your wire is cut, position it on the center of your feather and glue it down with your hot glue gun, making a spine on top of the wire. Once this cools you are technically finished! You are welcome to paint the back side of the feather either a solid, low-key color or you can repeat the iridescent pigment process on the back if both sides will be seen. It's all up to you on what you do with your beautiful, posable feather from here! Happy Cosplaying!



Completed posable feather



Feathers applied to armor



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TEXT BY TIFFANY PEGRAM



The Greatest Show at Con:
ACROBATICA
INFINITI

A CIRCUS WITH A COSPLAY TWIST



22

Wonder Woman hangs suspended from the ceiling by her lasso, one loop of rope around her thigh all that is keeping her airborne as she waves at the crowd. Deadpool balances on one hand on a thin pole three feet off the ground, legs bent as he defies gravity and the laws of physics. Sailor Moon twirls a hula hoop around her waist, executing a perfect cartwheel as it spins. Minions scamper around the edges of the space, building new scenery as Totoro waddles out and begins juggling soot sprites.

What is all of this? Is it a multi-genre crossover episode, or maybe someone's fanfiction? No, this is entirely real—and hopefully coming to a city near you, courtesy of Acrobatica Infiniti, the nation's first cosplay circus. Founded by Tana "Tank" Kano just over two years ago, Acrobatica Infiniti is a troupe of professionally-trained circus performers whose mission statement is to build a better artistic community and to strengthen the industry by providing work to established and emerging artists, and to bring the art of circus to people in the convention community who have never experienced it before by relating acts to popular characters and concepts in fandom and cosplay.

Tana has been a part of the circus industry for over ten years, but cosplay has been a part of her life for even longer. A professionally trained dancer, Tana's fascination with costumes guided her into a Fine Arts degree at the Art Institute of Chicago. College is when she first discovered cosplay, she tells us, after a friend invited her along to a convention and she spotted people dressing up as their favorite characters. She immediately fell in love with the idea, and says that a large part of that had to do with performing as a character. So a few years later, when she discovered the circus arts, it was all but certain that eventually the two would come together in a glorious display like Acrobatica Infiniti. In fact, even now those two loves mingle constantly; AI creates 2-4 new characters or acts each month (look for something new and exciting at GenCon this August!!) and currently has over 200 costumes, most of which have been made by Tana herself.

We've said the word 'circus' a lot, but what do we really mean by it? What is a circus, anyway? Tana says she's had to do some clarifying on that point as well. "Many people hear the word circus and think 'Barnum & Bailey,' because that's basically how America came to know the circus arts," she explains. "They think oh, lion tamers and trapezes and death-defying stunts. Really, contemporary circus is much more Cirque du Soleil—it isn't just one act after another that are completely unrelated to each other, it's about telling a story. Your acts have a theme or a message that ties them together,

whether that story is 'Deadpool invades the Disney Universe' or even just 'women unite against stereotypes.'" But while much of contemporary circus focuses on pain and struggle and an individual's growth, Tana finds it incredibly important to keep things lighthearted as well—which can be even harder to do. "To have a comedy act, you need to be okay with being completely vulnerable and fallible. Your onstage character needs to be able to fail, and that's a vulnerability that many artists, I think, aren't comfortable with."

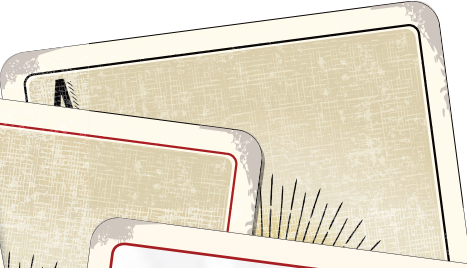
That all circles back to the thing that drives AI and makes it such a unique troupe: their use of circus acts by trained professionals to illustrate sides of a character you'd never expect. Some things are obvious, like their aerial rope act performed by Wonder Woman; of course Diana has her lasso, but the act is also an homage to early appearances of the heroine, where she was frequently caught within the coils of that same lasso or tied up, creating early links to bondage. Other acts have more lurking just below the surface, like one of the first acts created by AI—a knife-throwing performance with the Joker hurling blades at Harley Quinn. "It's such an unhealthy relationship," Tana explains. "We wanted to showcase the fun and vivacity of the characters that makes them so appealing to the fanbase, but also to illustrate the darker side of that relationship." Even her tech hands are part of the show, wearing minion costumes and making every set change an act in and of itself, instead of pulling people out of their state of immersion.

So how does one become a circus performer? Tana says that it's easier than ever these days, if you have the determination to

succeed and are willing to spend the years necessary for training. When she first went to school for it, she traveled to New Zealand and Australia, ending up with a Bachelor in Circus Arts from the National Institute of Circus Arts in Melbourne. Now, there's three circus schools in Chicago alone, and two of those have full-time programs. Is Tana worried that Acrobatica Infiniti might have competition in the cosplay circus arena any time soon? Not at all, she says, and not in the way people might think. "Some people might think that more people in an industry is bad, because you run out of jobs and people will be out of work, but it doesn't work that way in creative industries. The more artists there are, the more jobs there are, because we all create. We all need partners and performers and people to help us produce our visions." In fact, that's part of why she created AI in the first place. "There's an old-school mentality in America that's like, 'these are our jobs, you can't have them.' But there's been a noticeable shift towards the opposite in recent years, which is 'this is a community, and we accept you.' And besides, if you get stuck on exclusivity and keeping your club small, no one ever has a chance to grow."

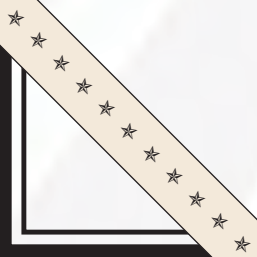
So how does one see an Acrobatica Infiniti performance in all its glory? Well, the troupe is local to Chicago, so they frequently perform in the Midwest and tour parts of the con circuit there, but they're definitely open to travel. Just tell your local con you want to see us there, suggests Tana. They love travel and sharing their stories with new people—and circus performers have a lot more in common with fanboys and girls than you might think. "We understand what it means to be passionate about something, so much so that you identify some part of yourself with it. That's what being a circus artist is. That's why we do what we do."







To learn more about Acrobatica Infiniti and to find out about upcoming performances, visit www.aicircus.com, and check out their YouTube channel for jaw-dropping videos at www.youtube.com/acrobaticainfiniti.



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ANIME CENTRAL

TEXT BY ALAN SCHOLTING / IMAGES BY MATTHEW SPERZEL

A couple of years ago, we attended the biggest anime convention in the mid-west. Well, when we caught wind that the convention juggernaut was turning twenty this year, we knew we had to go back.

Anime Central spared no expense making sure its double decade anniversary was one for the ages. Held once again at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois, ACen was fully loaded with celebrity voice acting guests, panels galore, and more cosplay activities than you could shake a stick at.

Heading up the guest list were fan favorites such as Shinichi 'Nabeshin' Watanabe, Crispin Freeman, and the 'Kevin Bacon' of anime himself, John Swasey. The convention also hosted a huge lineup of amazing musical performances by the voice behind Macross Frontier, May'n, the always energetic stylings of Gacharic Spin, and the progressive compositional melodies of IMERUAT, to name a few. That, of course, is in addition to over a dozen different electronic DJ's that kept the raves lit 'til morning on both Friday and Saturday.

Maybe concerts aren't your thing though. Maybe you prefer to kick back inside the nice cool panel rooms and discuss literally ANYTHING related to anime? Well, Anime Central has you covered there as well. This year's edition featured over two-hundred-and-fifty panels ranging from children's programming all the way to the late night NSFW Hentai and adult themed discussions. That's well over three-hundred hours of programming just in panels alone for those keeping track out there.

Now, some of you might be thinking, 'with everything they have going on, they probably don't have much room left for cosplay events'. Well, rest easy, because Anime Central hasn't forgotten about the cosplayers. In fact, in many regards, cosplay seems to be one of their primary focuses. For starters, this year's convention hosted over one-hundred-and-thirty different cosplay photo shoots...yeah, you read that correctly, over one-hundred-and-thirty! However, the most important cosplay event of the weekend took place during the Saturday night masquerade; and no, I'm not talking about the competition itself.

In late August of 2016, a wonderful person and incredible friend to the mid-west cosplay community was tragically taken from this world. Her name was Dani Roelandt. Since this was the very first

ACen without her, many of her friends hosted a memorial for her during the event. "Dani has been my very best friend and 'sister' for over ten years," explained Katy Lacy. "We met in college and immediately bonded over a mutual love of Sailor Moon. Dani was the one I called first with news, who I turned to for support, and with whom I shared my joy. She was the one who knew my every secret. She was my biggest cheerleader and, also, my reality check. Dani was my travel buddy, my cuddle buddy, and my partner in crime. She taught me how to use a sewing machine, read and alter patterns, line garments, and choose fabric. If not for her, I probably wouldn't still be cosplaying. Dani will always be my dearest friend."

During the Masquerade, many people close to Dani recreated some of her favorite costumes and came out on stage to then recreate poses from pictures of Miss Roelandt from previous conventions. It was an incredibly beautiful way to celebrate her life with something she loved very much. "Dani to me, was always a pure and open heart," Mogchelle told us of her friend. "She always had a smile on her face, and her heart on her sleeve. She always had warm hugs and bright smiles that lit up rooms as she came through. ACen was never ACen without her! 2017 was very surreal without her. For a few years, we talked about making Disney Princess Sailor Scouts together, since we hadn't had a chance to do a group cosplay with each other yet, but finding time was always hard with work and family commitments, but then next thing I knew, it was too late to do them with her. So, I put all of my work aside for a couple nights, and made my Sailor Elsa for ACen 2017, as my own personal tribute to Dani, and I hope she would have loved what I created. Since I wasn't able to be on stage as part of her memorial, I did have the honor of watching from back stage, as I was one of the craftsmanship judges. It was perfect, several of her closest friends recreated costumes she's made in the past, and they struck poses she used in those photos, from her Odette the Swan Princess, to her Naruto/Sailor Moon mash up! It was beautiful, and heart-warming, and it brought me happiness because of all of the love people have for her, and it reminded me of all the love she had for others! The world is less bright without our Moon Princess, our Super Girl, our Warrior Princess! But she's left a trail of happiness and love and light with her memory."

There's no doubt that her spirit of cosplay will run through the ACen halls forever, and there's no doubt that we'll be back again very soon to partake in another weekend at Anime Central.



Dani Roelandt images by Carulean Photography





Kawaii Enamel Style Pins DIY



MATERIALS

Jolee's Boutique Easy Image Dark Fabric Transfer Paper

Scanned Artwork

Cardstock backed foil and glittered paper*

Scissors

Iron

Assortment of adhesive gems

Two part doming jewelry epoxy

Paper Plate

Adhesive Pop Dots

Permanent glue

Metal pin backs, chains and barrettes.

Metallic paint pens

**Note: Glittered paper should be coated with real glitter, NOT plastic coated glitter paper which will melt when ironed. Papers are sold at most craft stores.*

Nº1 | Gather all of your supplies. Create your own pin designs to fit onto 8 ½" x 11", or scan in the provided artwork.

Nº2 | Following the Jolee's Boutique Easy Image Dark Transfer Paper directions, print out your pin designs and cut out each. Carefully peel away the paper backing from each design.

Nº3 | Place each design on top of your foil or glittered cardstock leaving at least a ¼" spacing between each design.

Nº4 | Place the included parchment paper on top of your designs and foil/glittered paper. Place the iron on top of the parchment paper and slowly move the iron around for about 10 seconds.

Nº5 | Once the designs are well affixed, carefully cut around each design, leaving about a 1/8" border of glitter or foil.

Nº6 | Once the designs are all cut out, purchase or make your own foam pop dots to lightly adhere to the backs of each design. Adhesive should be low tack so the pop dots may be easily removed. Place the designs with pop dots on the back, onto paper plates.

Nº7 | Add your choice of adhesive gems for sparkle.

Nº8 | In a well ventilated room, follow the directions on the two part doming jewelry epoxy. Carefully apply the epoxy onto each design (because the designs are raised on foam pop dots, any excess epoxy will drip onto the paper plate.) Allow the designs to dry for at least 8 hours.

Nº9 | Once fully dry, remove pop dots from the backs of each design and glue on pin backs with permanent glue. Once glue is dry, color the paper back with gold or silver metallic pens. Add chains or other jewelry findings of your choice, wear and enjoy!



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4



Step 5



Step 6



Step 7



Step 8



Step 9

DIY ENAMEL STYLE PINS

WITH JOLEE'S BOUTIQUE EASY IMAGE TRANSFER SHEETS

Print your designs onto Jolee's Boutique Easy Image Transfer Sheets for Dark Fabrics

jolee's EASY BOUTIQUE IMAGE

5 Transfer Sheets for inkjet printers
5 Feuilles de transfert pour imprimantes à jet d'encre
5 Láminas de apliques para impresoras a chorro de tinta

For Dark Fabrics

Pour tissus foncés

Para telas de colores oscuros

Cutout Intricate Designs with Ease Using EK Tools CutterBee Scissors Sold at: Joann's, Michaels & Hobby Lobby



KAWAII



Jolee's Transfer Paper Sold at: Michaels, Hobby Lobby, Joann's, & Amazon. Gems Sold at: Joann's & Michaels

Colors Print Vividly onto the Vinyl Transfer Paper. Iron onto Cardstock to Permanently Adhere. Add Jolee's Adhere and Epoxy for an Enamel Like Finish.

Happy Birthday, Usagi!

Sailor Moon Celebrates 25th Anniversary

TEXT BY TIFFANY PEGRAM / IMAGE BY MINERALBLUE



While magical girls have been around since the 60's in Japanese serials like Ribon, few would deny that Sailor Moon is the name that's always first in peoples' minds when it comes to the genre. Written and illustrated by Naoko Takeuchi, and first published in manga form in Japan in the serial Nakayoshi between 1991 and 1997, this year marks the anime's 25th anniversary of inspiring young girls (and boys!) everywhere. With five seasons of anime, eighteen volumes of manga, a live-action show, and even multiple musicals under its belt, it's safe to say that Sailor Moon is everywhere. And while those of us who fell in love at the very beginning may have had a hard time finding merchandise to show our love for the Sailor Scouts, Bandai Tamashii Nations has been making up for lost time over the last few years with super-poseable figures, prop replicas of Sailor Moon's wand as well as Tuxedo Mask's locket and many other

perfect-for-cosplay items, cell phone charms, and super adorable gashapon figures everywhere. Not to mention all the awesome licensed apparel! (How about those adorable Luna and Artemis purses from Samantha Vega Fashion?)

Fans around the world are also coming together in record numbers this year to show their love for the series, from small meetups in your local area to a full Sailor Moon Day event at Anime NYC on November 18th in New York City, where ten members of the English Sailor Moon Crystal voice cast will be appearing together live for the first time! With group autograph sessions, screenings, and tons of other events to be announced, we're definitely ready to put on our best magical girl transformation sequence and tiara and head to the Javits Center to ring in the start of another twenty-five years of Moon Tiara Magic. See you there!







COLOSSAL CON 2017

COSPLAY POOL PARTY

TEXT AND IMAGES BY MINERALBLU

Colossalcon is the date many of the top cosplayers across the country circle on their calendars each year in anticipation of the biggest cosplay pool party. Held each June at the Kalahari Resort and Waterpark in Sandusky, Ohio, Colossalcon gathers about 20,000 attendees across four days to celebrate cosplay in a waterpark environment.

This usually means cosplays of all kinds are adapted for swimsuit friendly wear and pool partying. In addition to waterpark fun, the resort also contains a petting zoo with a variety of wildlife as well as nearby fields and forested areas for unique cosplay photoshoot opportunities. With tropical-themed indoor and outdoor swimming pools and slides, and some beautiful surrounding countryside, cosplayers and photographers can get a little crazier than usual.

Sandusky, Ohio may not be the first thought to come to mind when it comes to amazing cosplay conventions, but every year many of the best cosplayers make the pilgrimage to Colossalcon for one of the biggest cosplay conventions of the year.


To experience more from this year's Colossalcon, check out the Mineralblu video coverage at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvqYPZEXjFY>











COLOR, & BIG SHAPES: THE STELLA CHOW INTERVIEW

TEXT
IMAGES

RICH KIRBY
STEVE PRUE



IT ALL BEGAN WITH ANIME.

Like many cosplayers, Stella Chuu told *Cosplay Culture* that anime was the gateway drug that hooked her on cosplay. Chuu's story arc as a full-time professional cosplayer and international star began when she was president of both her high school and university anime clubs.

No surprises here. Anime's appeal, like cosplay's – or even that of Chuu herself – is visceral.

"Japanese media loves color and big shapes," she told us. "Their aesthetic is to go over the top. Because anime and video games are a huge industry, there's a wide range of styles that are always trying to one-up each other. Giant robots, cute girls with machine gun hip cannons, adorable school uniforms... the list goes on."

Western pop culture, she laments, is a victim of a dreary modern American Realism. Even in our video games, "Everything has camo and a layer of grime. It doesn't feel like fantasy anymore because they're trying to make it look too real."

When the conversation turns to cultural divides, you would do well to listen to Stella Chuu. Born in New York, living now in L.A., traveling extensively, and with some family still living in Taiwan, she has a foot in both hemispheres. She also has some strong opinions about the style of American cosplay photography, or lack thereof.

"I feel that Western cosplay photography doesn't have a specific style," Chuu said. "Generally it's about photographing a model in a costume. Our weakest point is storytelling and building atmosphere."

"Asian cosplay photography is bright, crisp, and focuses heavily on aesthetic. They want the entire photo to transport

you into the world. I feel they have a stricter approach while Western has a relaxed approach. But at the same time, Western photography is so varied because we have significantly more people cosplaying and shooting." Sometimes, however, the West gets it right.

"My best (cosplay photography) experiences are always during private shoots outside of conventions," Chuu said. "We get ample time to shoot with props and assistance. I actually had a ton of fun shooting with *Cosplay Culture* because we had a confetti cannon and giant shiny balloons."

Yeah, well, that's how we roll. Shiny. But couldn't all of those cannons and confetti and such be intimidating to cosplayers being photographed for the first time? Chuu has some advice for newbies and their shooters.

"I think it's really important to develop a close relationship with your photographer. Many cosplayers assume that it's easy to take a good photograph. But for great photographers, they need to shoot the same model repeatedly. It allows them to become comfortable with each other and learn each others' nuances. The best photos I've seen are always from pairs that have worked together for many projects."

Stella's stardom is a true product of the 2010s. She attributes "one hundred percent" of her success to social media, which she plays like a Stradivarius. Chuu encourages young Padawans who want to study at the feet of the Master to message her on Twitter (her favorite platform) and book themselves into one of the social media marketing classes she teaches.

In fact, the first four hours of Stella Chuu's day are devoted to social media: checking emails and messages, planning posts and doing admin work. All that is before her Twitch stream, which runs another four hours, during which time she builds her costumes live on the internet (she makes around 20 costumes a year). The next half of her sixteen hour workday is spent finishing her costumes, while watching anime. She manages to carve out two hours a week for playing video games, but otherwise this goes on seven days a week, when she is not traveling and attending one of about 20 conventions a year.





Recently Chuu has been using her time at convention panels to promote body positivity. She organized “Underwatch” at Katsucon 2017, for which she designed and created lingerie in the style of characters’ costumes in the game Overwatch. Her designs were modeled by people of all genders, races and sexual identities.

“I want to make being sexy a norm,” she says.

Overwatch has been insinuating itself into much of Chuu’s work recently. She just completed what she reckons is the most intricate build of her career, the game’s Raptorian Pharah skin.

“It took me a little under a year to complete, with many breaks to reassess,” Chuu said. “Although I was working with my favorite material, EVA foam, it was still an overwhelming challenge. I rushed the build for Anime Expo and ended up scrapping the whole project because I wasn’t happy with the result. The craftsmanship was very sloppy and the glue wouldn’t have dried in time for me to wear the costume on the show floor. I put it on the back burner for half a year and dedicated that time to honing my armor building skills. I also completely redesigned all my patterns in Adobe Illustrator. I use a method similar to origami or pepakura but instead of using a 3D engine, I hand drew each polygon. It’s a slow process and I should probably learn some 3D modeling so I can be more accurate.”

Learning is a continuous progression for Stella Chuu. Despite the overwhelming pressure to churn out costumes, she knows that her fans expect to see her work with ever newer materials and media. Schooling herself in vacuum form and the use of a CNC machine (a kind of computer-controlled lathe) are in her immediate curriculum.

For all of us with faces pressed against the glass on the outside of this candy factory, the pace seems breakneck, if not downright unsustainable. Chuu, however, believes it’s all getting easier, for her, and every cosplayer.

“There are so many resources out there that we didn’t have in the past,” Chuu reminded us. “It’s so much easier to make a great costume and photograph. Jump on YouTube, join a forum, and ask your friends to help!”

“There are so many resources out there that we didn’t have in the past. It’s so much easier to make a great costume and photograph. Jump on YouTube, join a forum, and ask your friends to help!”

The most important resource, and a recurrent one in the lives of just about every successful international cosplayer with whom we speak, is a partner who “gets it.” Stella met hers back when she day-jobbed as a mobile apps developer.

“One month into the relationship, we attended Katsucon,” she told Cosplay Culture. “On the last day of the con, I told him that I wanted to become a cosplayer like Yaya Han and Vampy Bit Me. He nodded at me. I thought that he misunderstood me so I further explained that I wanted to travel the world from convention to convention dressed up as my favorite characters and somehow make it a career. He nodded again and replied ‘Yeah. I know. Just tell me what you need me to do. I want to help.’ He was ready and willing. We’ve been on this journey ever since that day.”

Stella and Jeff have been married now for two years.

YOU CAN FIND STELLA CHUU ONLINE HERE:

www.facebook.com/stellachuuuuu
www.instagram.com/stellachuuuuu
www.twitter.com/stellachuuuuu
www.youtube.com/stellachuu
www.twitch.tv/stellachuu
www.patreon.com/stellachuu







ARMOR PATTERNING

with Arda Wigs

TEXT BY KYLE MATHIS

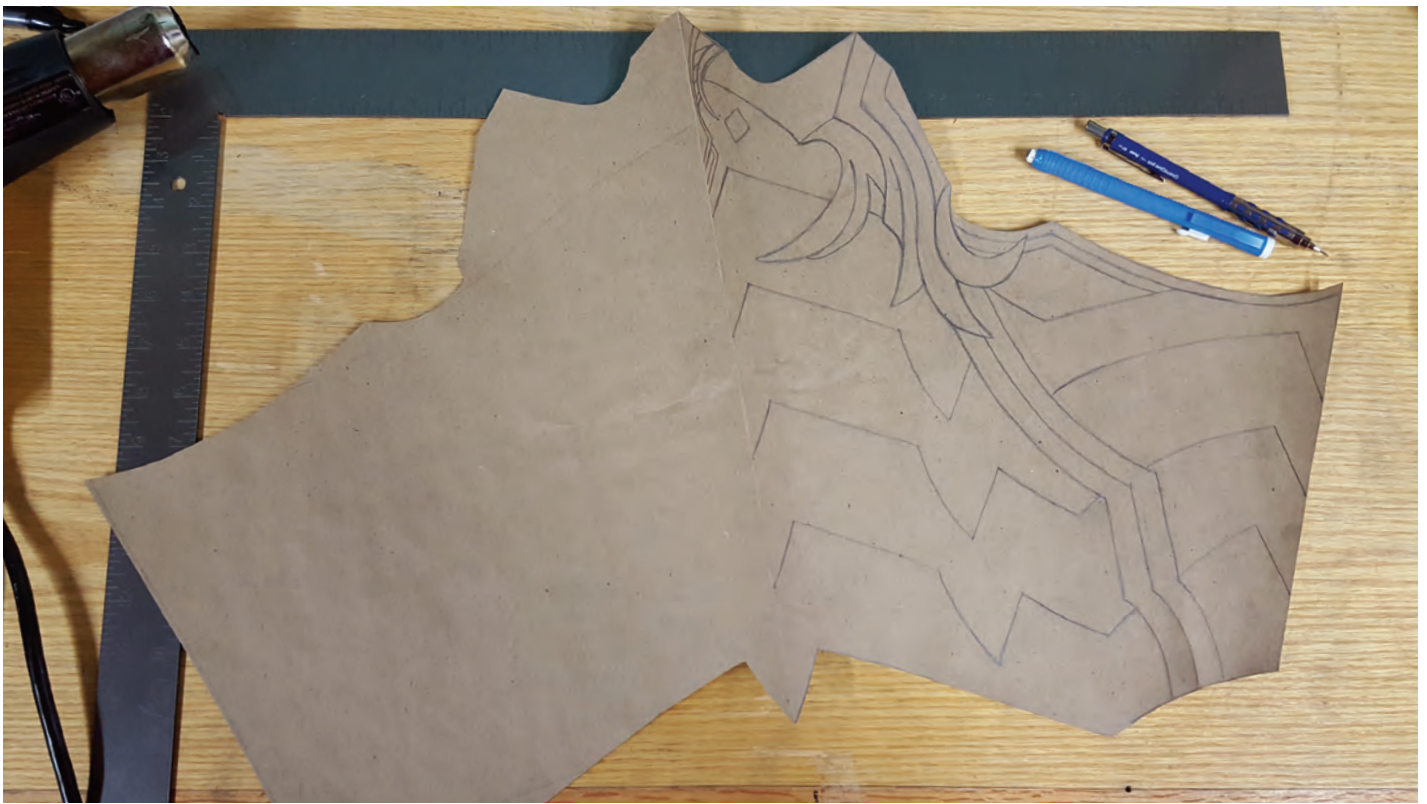


Armor costumes have grown in popularity exponentially over the past few years. Much of this has been attributed to the growing availability of higher quality thermal plastics and foams for armor and prop construction. As more people take interest in this creative hobby, the need for instruction has grown as well. So how does one begin making armor? Unlike regular clothing, fantasy armors have very different structures, and require their own unique guidelines to create them. Today we will delve into the process of patterning out armor for costumes.

Patterning is the foundation for any outfit, whether it be cloth, plastic, leather, metal, or otherwise. To create a pattern based on an existing design, look for as many reference pictures as possible. It could be concept art, fanart, screenshots, etc. If someone else has already tackled the costume, you might draw inspiration from them as well. Full body shots for the front, sides, and back are excellent, but it's also a good idea to obtain references for unique angles and fine details. Be aware of any inconsistencies that may occur between different types of references. For example, a concept sketch for a video game armor may have different details or proportions than the 3D render finalized in the game. This tends to be a blessing rather than a curse, as it offers more freedom to choose what you like and don't like between your references. Take note of these inconsistencies so they don't potentially throw you off course later. As you work on the project, you can figure out which references are most helpful to hold onto if things get overwhelming. But it's safer to start with more than you might need.

TO MAKE A PATTERN, YOU WILL NEED THE FOLLOWING:

- Glad Press'n Seal, or a plastic wrap of some kind: This is to wrap around parts of your body to create an initial patterning shape.
- Paper: I prefer large pieces; Home Depot carries large rolls of brown builder's paper.
- Pencils and erasers: You will probably be making adjustments to your pattern sketches, so pencils with erasers are ideal.
- Rulers and straight edges: I recommend investing in a larger ruler and/or T-square from Home Depot to help with longer lines. Curved and shaped rulers can also be beneficial if you aren't as skilled with organic lines.
- Scissors: Cheap scissors are fine, though more industrial scissors will be easier to use for thicker materials. Designate these scissors as exclusive to your crafting materials. Do not use them for cutting fabric or wigs.
- Masking tape: Use to connect pattern pieces together as you test them out.
- Camera: This is optional, but documenting your work as you go will help retrace your steps in later projects. Sharing your progress on social media is also an opportunity to gain support and energy from your friends and fellow costumers.
- You will also need a decent table or floor space to work on. This may seem like common sense, but finding the right space for a project can sometimes be difficult. Give yourself enough room to spread out and get potentially messy.



Utilizing your reference images, take measurements that correspond to your body such as the length of your forearm, hand width, shoulder width, etc. Always compare the costume to your own body proportions. It doesn't matter how big, small, or strangely shaped a character is; the end goal is to make the shapes fit with your own. This is especially important for armor because unlike clothing it has little or no give to it. Sometimes it helps to have a friend help you draw/cut out shapes while they are on you, or you could buy a mannequin/dress form that can adjust to your size. A duct tape dummy is fantastic for draping if you want a body double.

Use plastic wrap or Press'n Seal to wrap around a part of your body, such as your forearm, and then cut it open. This will be a basic shape of your body part that you can lay flat and use as a guide when creating the final shape of your armor piece (such as a bracer). For more organic shapes, you might need to cut a few darts to lay the piece flat. This technique is most useful for limbs and helmets.

You can alternatively trace around different body parts to create a starting point. If you trace the outline of your arm, and then add a couple of inches to each side, you'll have a rough half-piece of the arm for your pattern. Most shapes found in armor can lie flat when broken down. Always look for basic shapes such as circles, squares, and triangles. If it helps to draw out basic shapes first and connect the dots to make an armor piece, then that's one possible solution. Your pattern pieces don't need to be clean to be effective, and you can always



retrace your pattern on a clean piece of paper/cardboard once you have the shapes to your liking. Don't be afraid to make mistakes along the way. The whole purpose of pattern making is trial and error with cheaper materials until it's perfected, and then the final pattern can be applied to the actual costume armor materials.

A large aspect of patterning comes from understanding how the armor functions on the character. Something to consider is that in all forms of media apart from live action, the artists are usually guilty of drawing/rendering armor in ways that allow them to distort for the sake of the animation. In real life, armor doesn't stretch with your body, so you won't always be able to replicate the mobility of a set of armor to the extent it has in a videogame. You will also need to figure out how all the pieces connect to each other in a functional manner. There are plenty

of characters out there who are shirtless but have magically attached pauldrons with no visible straps. Sometimes a bit of artistic license needs to be taken for the sake of practicality. Elastic straps are my favorite method for attaching the various layers of armor together, because it provides extra flexibility and movement. Making notes of this while you pattern will help alleviate any stress later when you are constructing the costume.

Figure out which layers of armor need to be able to move with you, and which ones won't move at all. The ones that move can use straps to anchor them to each other, while the static layers can be consolidated. For example, a gauntlet with several layers between the wrist and elbow can be glued together because the forearm won't bend, but you might use elastic straps to connect the forearm to the elbow piece to allow movement. You can typically draw out your pattern pieces in this fashion: start with one shape, and then break it down into individual layers. Consider extra allowances for overlapping layers when you are ready to cut them out from the final material. Drawing everything together first will help you to keep a fluid design.

Once you have created your finalized pattern, you may consider tracing a copy so you have a backup in case anything goes wrong, or if you need to make further alterations later. Having a fully intact pattern can also be beneficial beyond your current project if you decide to make duplicates for other people, or start a new project with similarities to your current one.

Cat Purse Tutorial



MATERIALS

½ yd. fabric

½ yd. heavyweight fusible interfacing

¼ yd. fusible web

12" zipper

Matching thread

Two safety eyes or buttons

Small pieces of fabric for applique and contrast

Cut the purse, ears and nose from pattern pieces.

You will also need the following:

Fabric

1- 2 ½" x 15" Bottom gusset

2- 2 ½" x 12" Top gusset

1- 3" x 36" – Shoulder strap option

2- 3" x 14" – Handle option

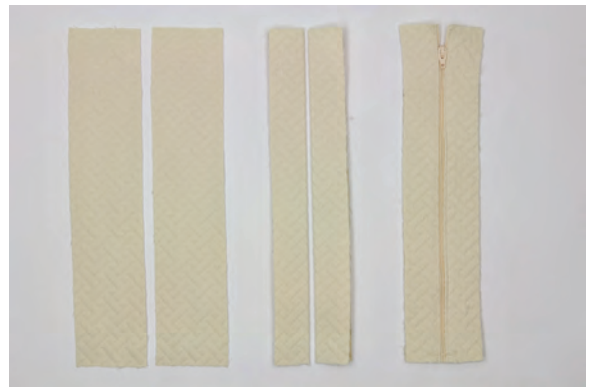
Interfacing

1- 2 ½" x 15" Bottom gusset

2- 2 ½" x 12" Top gusset

1- 3" x 36" – Shoulder strap option

2- 3" x 14" – Handle option



Nº1

TOP GUSSET Press the long side of each 2 ½" x 12" piece of fabric in half. Pin closed zipper under folded edges. Stitch each side of the zipper using an adjustable zipper foot.



Nº2

SHOULDER STRAP Fuse interfacing to wrong side of shoulder strap fabric following the manufacturer's instructions. Press under 1" on the long side. Press the remaining fabric over the pressed length as shown. Working from the underside of the strap, zigzag stitch over the open edge. Repeat on the opposite side of the shoulder strap.



Nº3

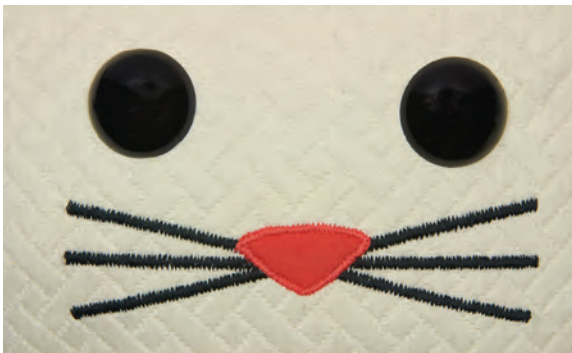
Pin the underside of the shoulder strap to the right side of one short end of the gusset top. Baste. Repeat on the other short end of the gusset.



Nº4

BOTTOM GUSSET Fuse interfacing to wrong side of 2 ½" x 15" bottom gusset. With right sides together stitch the bottom gusset to the top gusset. (If you are using the shoulder strap, the strap should be sandwiched between your top and bottom gussets.)

NOTE: For all variations below, complete bag front decoration at Step 5 and assemble the same as for cat purse.



Nº5

Mark eyes and whisker on purse front. Create the cat whisker's using a zigzag stitch. Work from the center outward. Turn and repeat. Fuse the fusible web to the wrong side of the nose following manufacturer's instructions. Peel backing and fuse the nose to purse front. Applique around all outer edges of nose using a zigzag stitch. Add plastic craft eyes or buttons.



Nº6

Pin the outer ear to the inner ear with right sides together. Stitch a ¼" seam, leaving the bottom edge open. Clip curves. Turn to right side. Fold and baste the open edge. Baste ear to the upper purse front matching large dots.



Nº7

With right sides together, pin the gusset to the purse front, centering the zipper portion of the gusset to the purse front. Stitch a ¼" seam around the entire purse front. Open the zipper, then repeat on the purse back.



Nº8

SUPER HERO PURSE OPTION Fuse the fusible web to the large circle following the manufacturer's instructions. Peel backing and fuse the circle to purse as shown. Applique around all outer edges of large circle using a zigzag stitch. Repeat for small circle. Add iron on star appliques.



Nº9

VEGGIE PURSE OPTION Fuse the fusible web to the wrong side of facial components following the manufacturer's instructions. Peel backing, fuse and applique the two outer hair components. Fuse and applique the third hair component and mouth. Secure plastic animal eyes and nose.



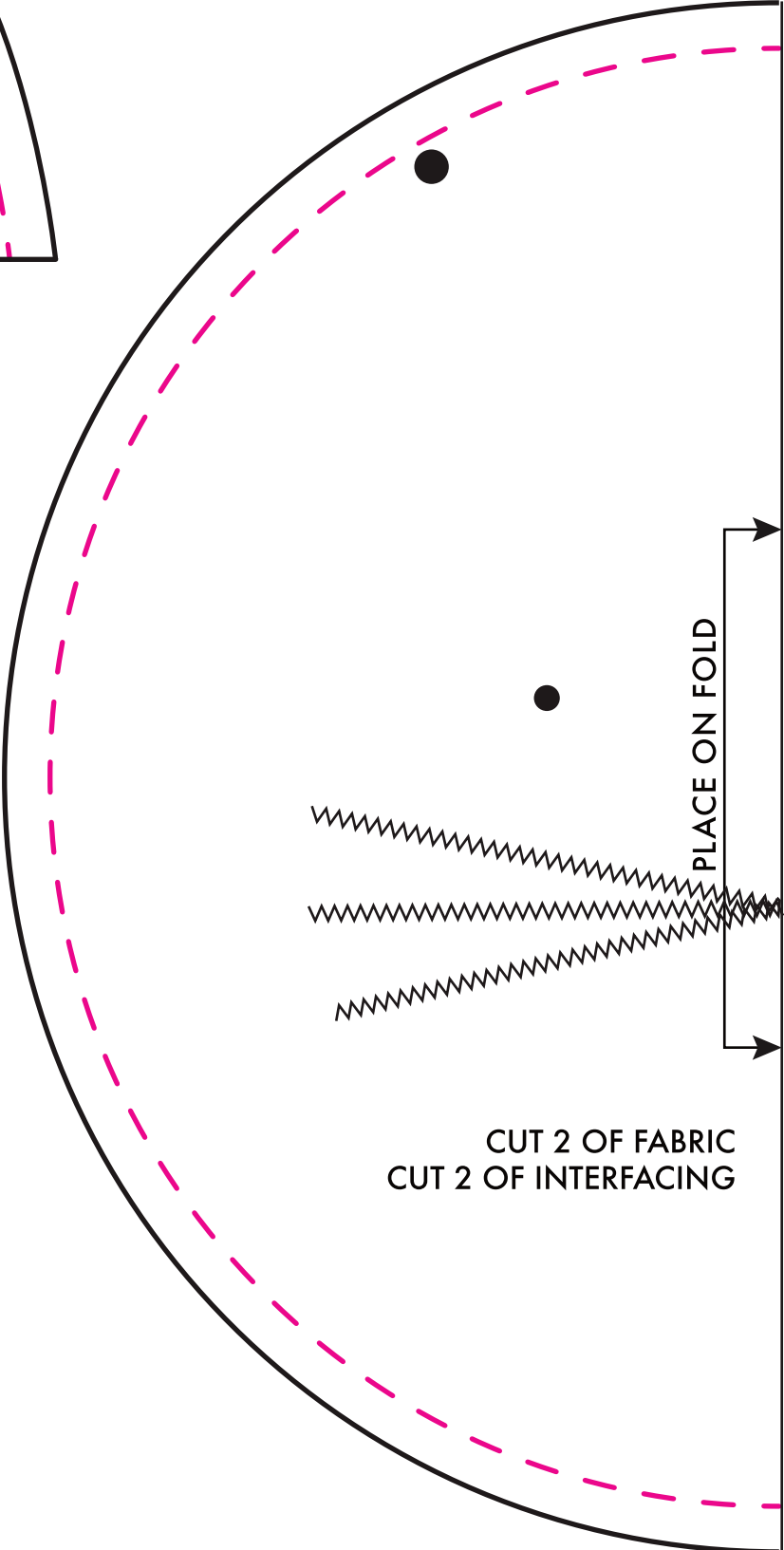
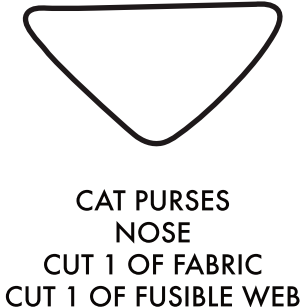
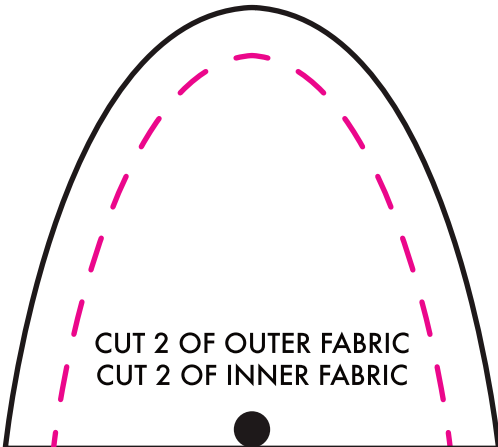
Nº10

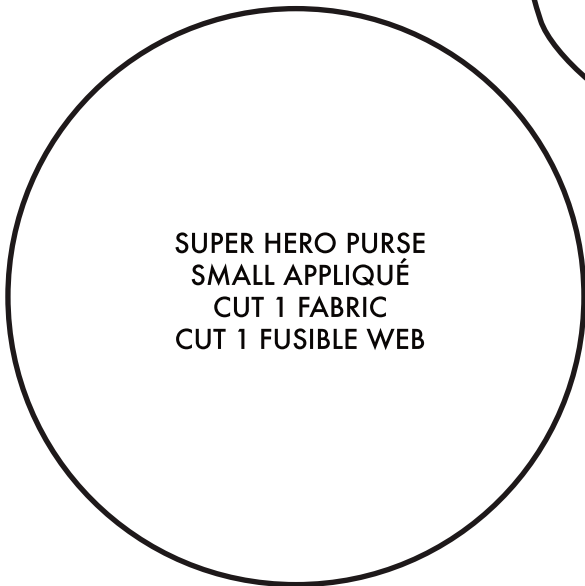
BLACK CAT PURSE OPTION Trace the 1" circle pattern onto white fabric. Do not cut. Fuse interfacing to wrong side of fabric. Applique the eye pupil. Cut to size. Fuse the fusible web to the interfacing following the manufacturer's instructions. Peel backing and fuse to purse front. Applique with matching thread color around all outer edges.

NOTE: If using short handles, use markings for ears as placement guides and attach at Step 6 in place of ears.

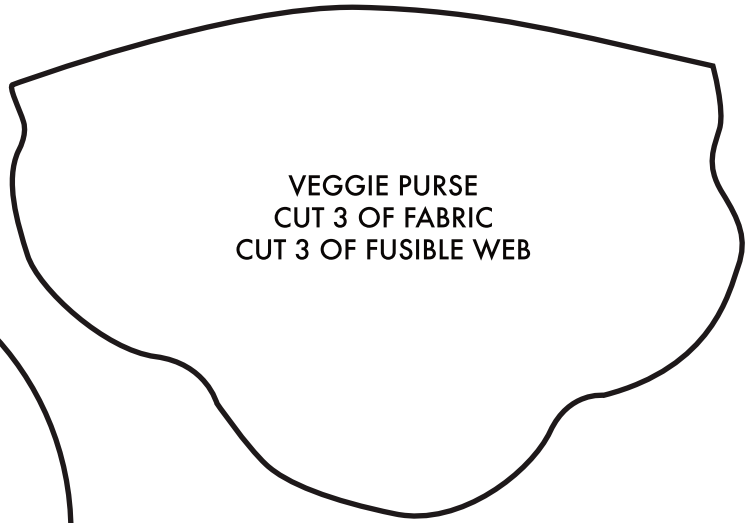


CAT PURSE

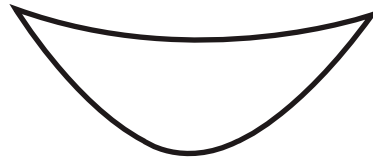




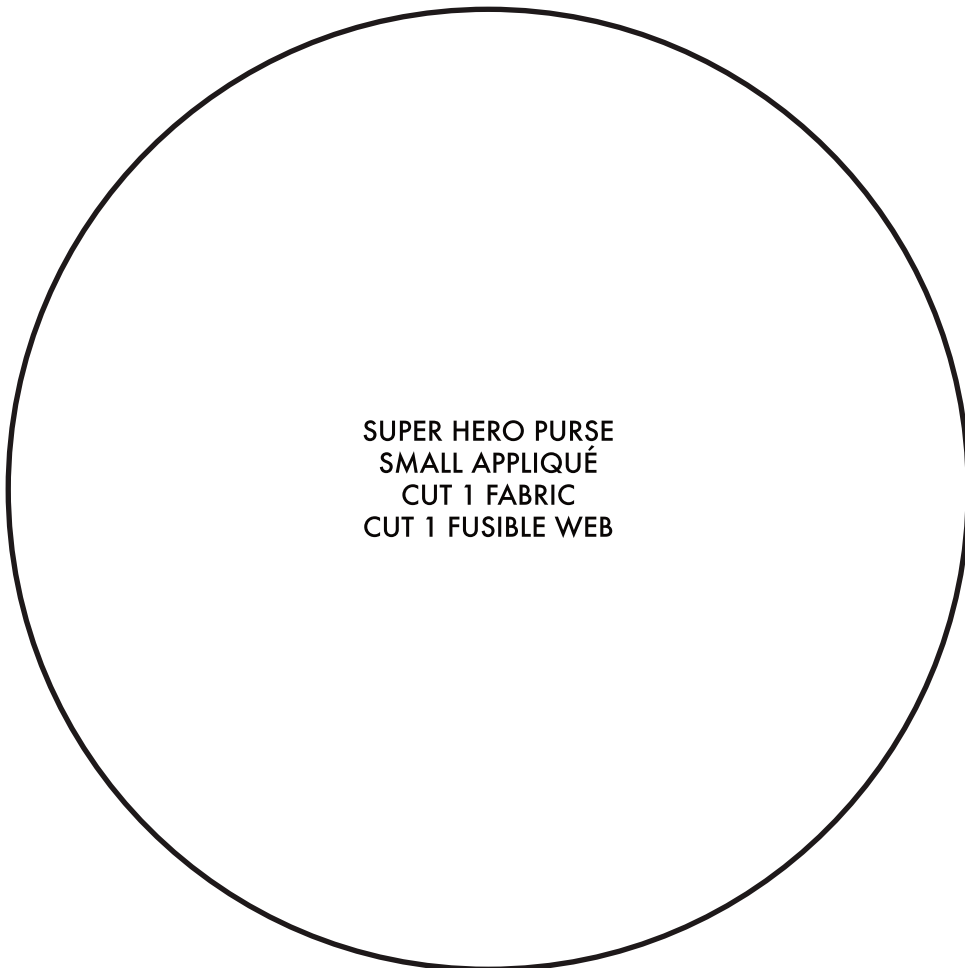
SUPER HERO PURSE
SMALL APPLIQUÉ
CUT 1 FABRIC
CUT 1 FUSIBLE WEB



VEGGIE PURSE
CUT 3 OF FABRIC
CUT 3 OF FUSIBLE WEB



VEGGIE PURSE
MOUTH
CUT 1 OF FABRIC
CUT 1 OF FUSIBLE WEB



SUPER HERO PURSE
SMALL APPLIQUÉ
CUT 1 FABRIC
CUT 1 FUSIBLE WEB

A-KON

Japanese, Geek,
and Pop Culture
Since 1990

TEXT AND IMAGES BY MINERALBLU



The longest running anime convention in North America, A-Kon is held each June in the Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas area. As one of the largest anime conventions in the country, A-Kon attracts a large number of amazing cosplayers to the Texas summer heat.

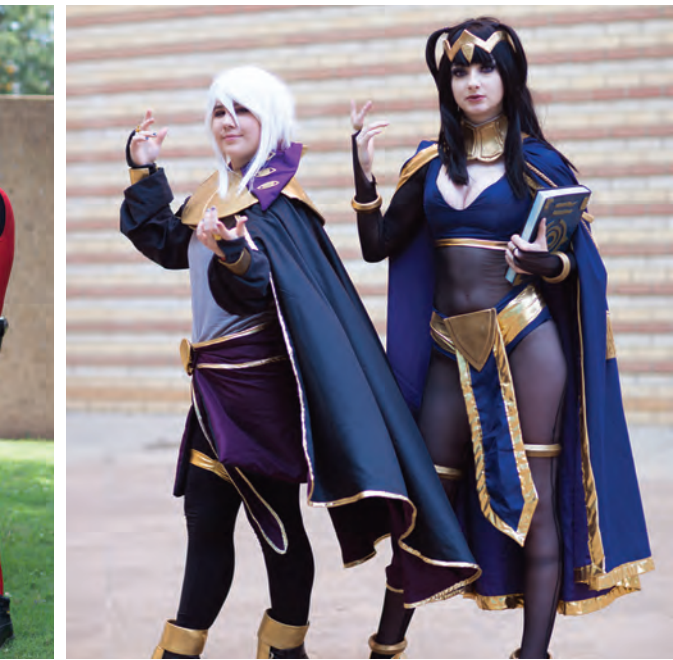
First held in 1990 with just 380 people in attendance, A-Kon was ranked the 2nd largest North American anime convention as of 2016 behind Anime Expo with over 30,000 attendees. While A-Kon is centered on anime and screenings of films and television series, many other activities take place encompassing various segments of geek and Japanese pop culture. These events include panels with cosplay guests, voice actors, meetups, authors and artists, a console and tabletop gaming area, combat arts demonstrations, art shows, and concerts.

A-Kon returns in 2018 to Fort Worth, Texas on June 8-10, 2018. To experience more from this year's A-Kon, check out the Mineralblu video coverage at <https://youtu.be/s7r6qHK4wpQ>









ANIME'S MECHA STOMP INTO THE MAINSTREAM

TEXT BY RICH KIRBY





Photo by Dara Phan

Giant walking fighting machines, like so many beloved science fiction tropes, can trace their origin back to Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. But whereas a couple of Brits may have invented them, it was the Japanese who took them seriously.

They called them mecha, and now we do, too. Cartoon fans of A Certain Age will remember Gigantor (“Bigger than big! Stronger than strong!”) from the early 1960s. Gigantor may have been the first giant robot anime distributed on American TV, but Jimmy Sparks’ metallic BFF was more day-saving deus ex machina than mecha. Mark Gibson, in his *A Brief History of Japanese Robophilia*, credits the prolific manga artist Go Nagai’s *Manzinger Z* as the first mecha. Both the eponymous manga and anime debuted in 1972.

There was a small but steady trickle of mecha media during the rest of the 70s as writers, animators and audiences alike tried to wrap their minds around heat sinks and neural links. Then the floodgates – or, rather, the mechbay doors – opened.

Mobile Suit Gundam, which dropped in Japan in 1979, served up complex politics-driven plots and was less about the machine than the men inside them. Still, it would all have been for naught were it not for the toys.

The Gundam series caught the eye of plastic model makers Bandai, who commenced producing frighteningly detailed versions of the Gundam mecha for enthusiasts to assemble and paint (a hobby now referred to as “Gunpla”). Despite the show’s hasty cancellation in 1980 due to low ratings, enthusiasm for the new kits sparked a quick resurrection. Bandai went on to become the largest toy manufacturer in Japan and have a hand in both the production and distribution of the many Gundam series to follow, creating one of the richest legacies in all anime.

The *Macross* and *Robotech* series debuted in Japan in the 80s, but back in the U.S., giant robots really took off by getting small. The game company FASA Corporation brought mecha to the tabletop in 1985 with its *BattleTech* miniatures game and spawned an unlikely and uneven entertainment empire that ranged from a Saturday morning American cartoon series (bad!) to networked, early VR “*BattleTech Centers*” in which players entered cockpits and dueled other “mechwarrriors” around the country (so awesome it hurt!).

(Fun Nerd Fact: FASA originally called their mecha game BattleDroids until they received a letter from LucasFilm’s legal department, recommending otherwise...)

If Gundam gave mecha anime its brains, then *Neon Genesis Evangelion* gave it soul. The anime famously brought Christian



Photo by NGO Photography

themes, Kabbalah and kick-ass female mecha jockeys to the table. Coolly competent and terminally pretty pilots Rei Ayanami and Asuka Soryu showed mech-head fanboys that piloting a skyscraper-tall killing machine was woman's work.

For professional Canadian cosplayer Riki LeCotey, aka Riddle, Evangelion was one of the first series that got her into anime: "Up until Eva, I had only experienced fun, light-hearted anime. Between the designs, music and complex story, I was hooked. "Riddle also has a soft spot for Rei – particularly her work clothes. "I have always loved the design of the plugsuits!" Riddle told Cosplay Culture. "Rei's personality is mysterious, but pivotal to the series, struggling with her own feelings and who she is as her own individual."

In addition to being one of the most sought-after professional cosplayers in the world, Riddle is the founder of the charity group, Cosplay for a Cause. She has raised over \$50,000 for charities worldwide. This year, one hundred percent of the group's sales of a cosplay calendar are going to the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Giant walking tank love reached critical level in 2000. It was then when Cartoon Network began airing Gundam Wing – the tenth installment in the Mobile Suit Gundam series, but the first to hit U.S. cable television. Ben Albert, like many high school students at the time, was bitten by the mecha bug. A decade of collecting Gundam models, toys, games, DVDs, books and other items

culminated in his first cosplay from the series, an RX-78 Gundam. It took Albert, aka Ubers Cosplay, five months and a broad palette of materials to craft his ground type Gundam.

"The majority of the armor parts are made with 1mm Sintra®," the south Florida resident explained. "Certain sections that need more flexibility like the thighs, biceps, and waist are made with rubber coated EVA foam. The container backpack is made from foam core board in an effort to keep it as lightweight as possible. The torso is reinforced with fiberglass to better support the weight of the shoulders and backpack."

Anime fans don't award ambulatory tanks points for subtlety, and Albert doesn't disappoint. He has been known to rig a motion controlled sound system to make mechanical stomping noises from the speaker in his costume's chest. That, plus the machine gun sound effects from his arm and the Christmas lights and LEDs which illuminate his cosplay from within and without, make finding room in the costume for battery storage a real issue.

The biggest challenge for Albert, however, was figuring out how to get the whole magilla to and from conventions. In cosplay, Gundam mobile suits aren't all that mobile. Albert solved his transport issues with some adroit design.

"The torso is able to completely split in half by just removing two

metal pins, saving a lot of space for shipping. The large cannon breaks down into 5 separate pieces. The entire costume is able to condense to just two boxes for shipping.”

The year 2000 also saw the launch of Sony’s Playstation 2. Among the many franchise-starting games debuting with the console was Konami’s mecha game, *Zone of the Enders*. It would be made into an anime less than a year later. *ZotE*’s “orbital frames” may have been inspired by *Gundam*’s mobile suits, but their design – based upon Egyptian gods – was a completely new take.

Cosplayer Ruby Taki, one half of the New York-based team Pro Voltage Cosplay, remembers falling in love with the “dark, fierce and powerful” Anubis, the mecha piloted by *ZotE*’s villain. The eight months it took to craft her enormous costume included learning to walk on digitigrade stilts.

The Japanese-born Ruby met her cosplay partner, Shiori Raiden, at New York Comic Con in 2012 when they noticed each other playing characters from the same video game. Now they choose a new game or anime to cosplay for each convention, with Shiori portraying the hero and Ruby working the bad guy.

Jehuty, *ZotE*’s protagonist and Anubis’ opposite number, was Shiori’s first attempt at mecha cosplay. The costume is a masterwork of sculpting clay, resin parts and sheets of styrene



Photo by Beth Brown

plastic, all held together by hot glue and backed by fiberglass. The toughest part, according to the Hong Kong-born Raiden, was the math: figuring out the right proportions of the oversized mecha.

In the last couple of years, mecha have power-boostered their way into the mainstream. *Pacific Rim* may not have been the first big screen live-action treatment of mecha (1990’s beloved cult classic *Robot Jox* holds that distinction), but it was a first for Big Hollywood. The mecha versus monsters slugfest directed by Guillermo del Toro earned \$411 million at the box office.

All that’s just fine with cosplayer Peter Kokis. His all-time favorite mecha is *Pacific Rim*’s three-armed, triplet-driven “Jaeger,” *Crimson Typhoon*. Kokis’ *Typhoon* cosplay build took over 550 hours to build, which does not include time spent scavenging for the parts.

Understand that Kokis, proprietor of Brooklyn Robotworks, builds all his ‘bot costumes from found parts. Nuts, bolts, washers, sponge holders, egg slicers, hair curlers, toilet plungers... these are all grist for his mecha mill. His “Brooklyn *Typhoon*” weighs in at 158 pounds – that’s a lot of salvage and scavenging.

“I am a former military pilot,” Kokis told *Cosplay Culture*, “and design my exos like an aircraft – modular and to be upgraded. [Brooklyn *Typhoon*’s] two right arms are a 99 percent match in all dimensions, and that took a lot of work and a lot of different mannequin arms and hands (yup, that’s how I did that). I love his claw (that was 30 hours’ work) and it’s a really close match to the character’s. I couldn’t resist all the gears all over him, about a dozen different sizes of toy truck wheels for those. His feet are mouse traps mounted on top of rat traps. Seriously.

“His toughest part by far was his head, because it’s not a head but a cylinder... how do I fit my head inside a cylinder? It took me six attempts to get his head right, 125 hours of work. That’s 26 pounds of robot head, and when I croak I want that head buried with me.”

Kokis has an international clientèle in Russia and China who hope he’ll be around a long time. Stateside he is a fixture at New York area cosplay conventions.

Although fictional mecha seem most comfortable blasting their way through dystopian futures, their immediate future in pop culture – East and West – seems bright indeed. A brand new mecha anime series, *Knights and Magic*, just debuted in July 2017 in Japan, and the *Pacific Rim* sequel is slotted for February 2018.

Neon Light Up Sword DIY



MATERIALS

One 40"x32" sheet of 1/4" foam core

X-acto knife

Neon EL wire (purchased on Amazon) about 6'

Permanent glue

Spray Paint (we used multiple colors to make a rainbow design)

Glitter (if desired)

Gems (if desired)

Tissue paper

Template on page 72

Nº1

Trace templates onto foam core and cut out as directed, making sure to pay attention to quantity of pieces to cut. Spray paint all pieces as desired and allow to dry before assembling. We chose to paint a rainbow effect on our sword. If desired, glitter I&J pieces and K front and back pieces. Glue or tape as you wrap the EL wire around piece A, starting at the bottom of one side and wrapping up and over the top of the second side, leaving the leftover wire and battery pack hanging down from the bottom.

Nº2

Assemble piece B over piece A so EL wire is threaded between both sides. Slide piece C from the bottom onto pieces A and B.

Nº3

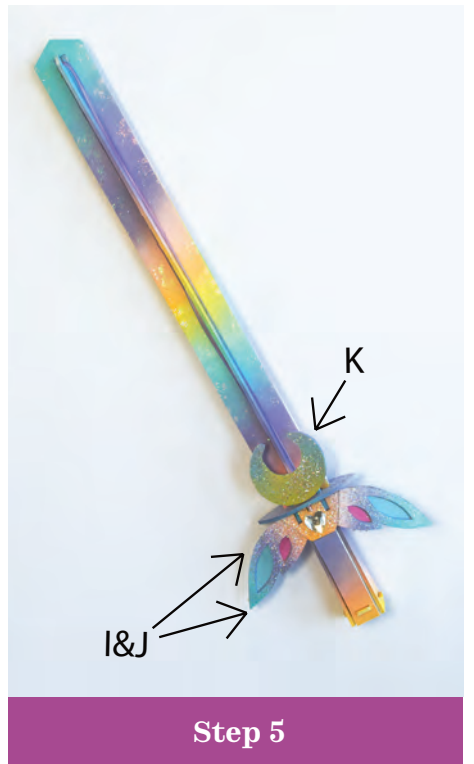
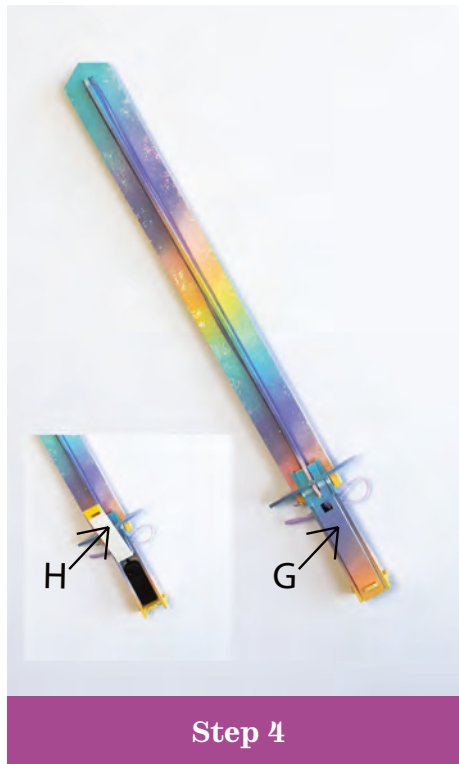
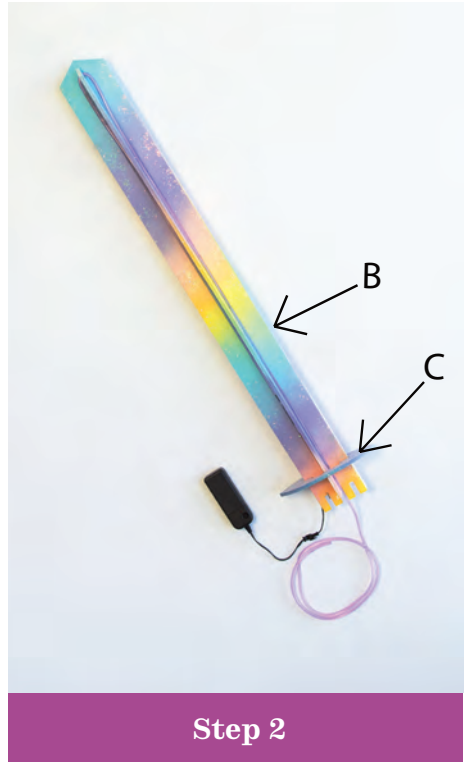
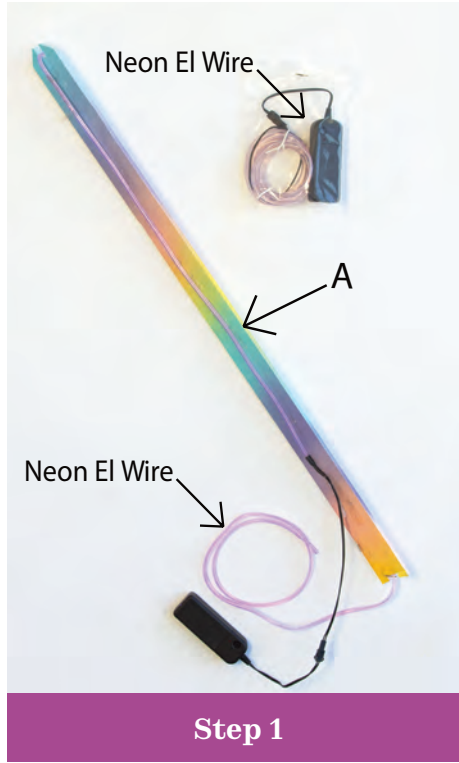
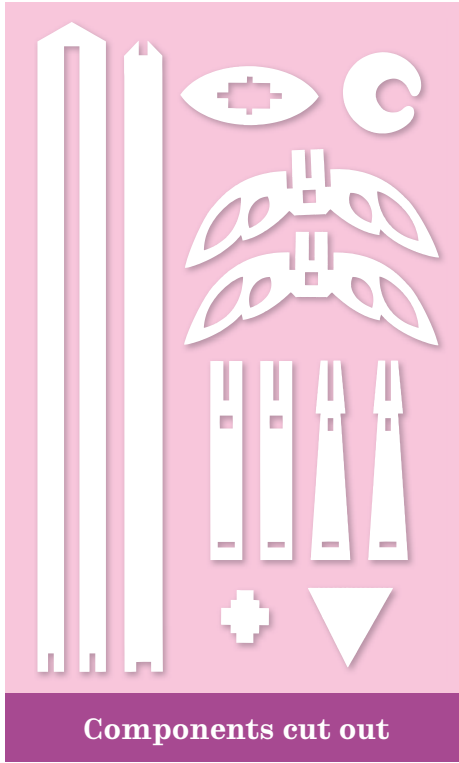
Slide D&E pieces into pieces B and C. Slide piece F into the bottom slots of D&E. Thread the remaining EL wire through the two side holes of pieces D&E and back up through the center of the sword. Glue or tape in place.

Nº4

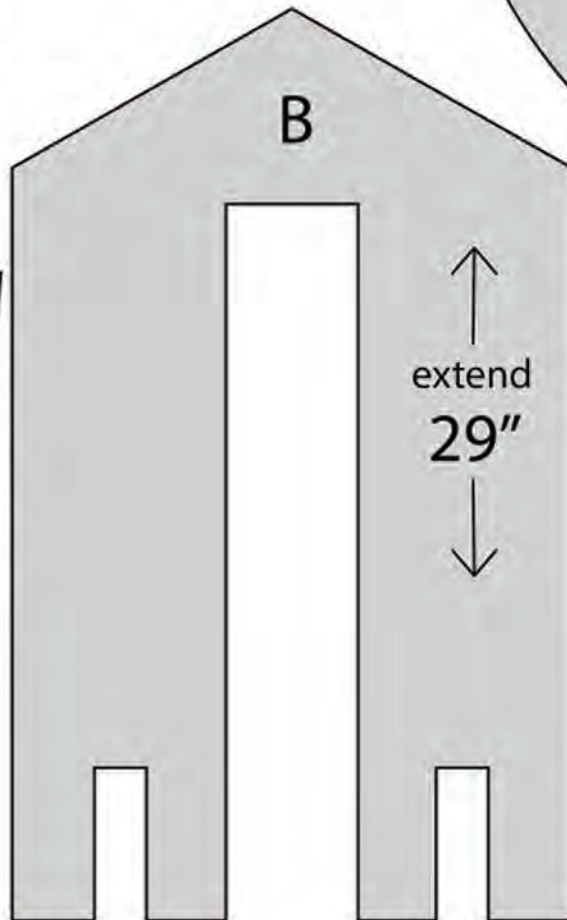
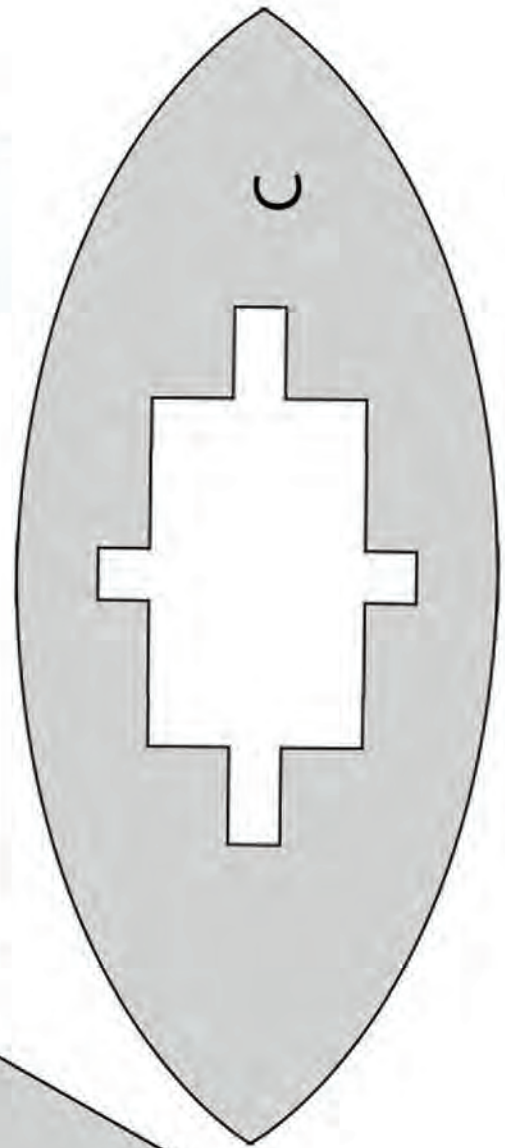
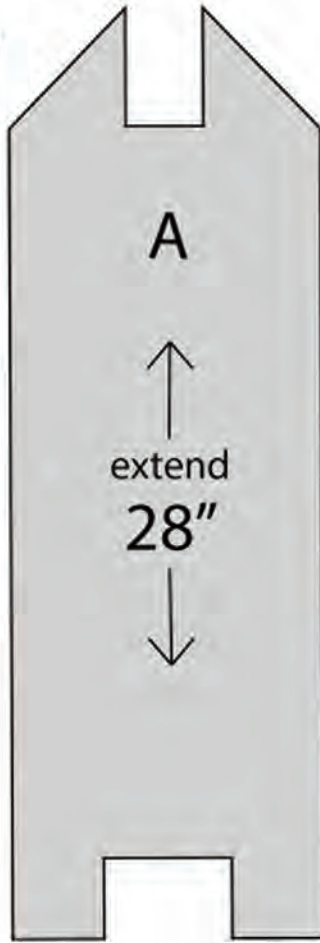
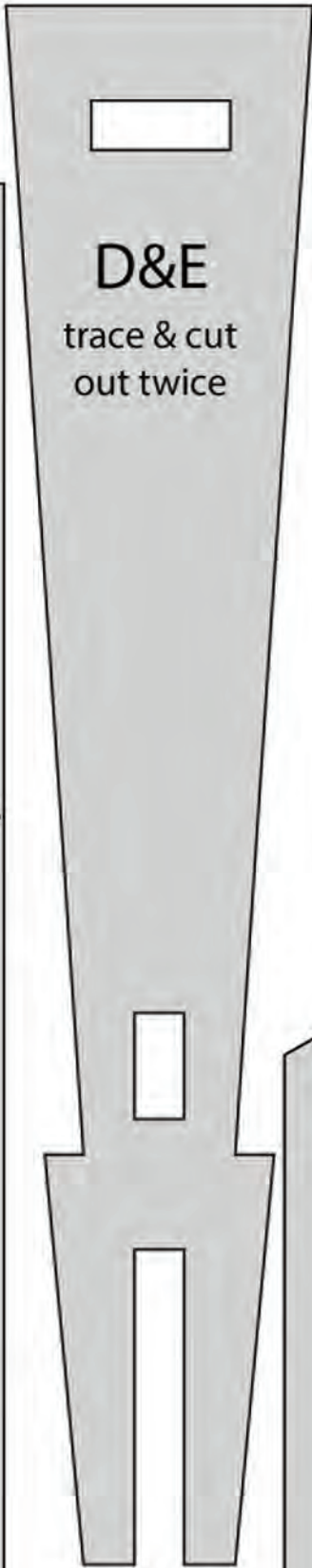
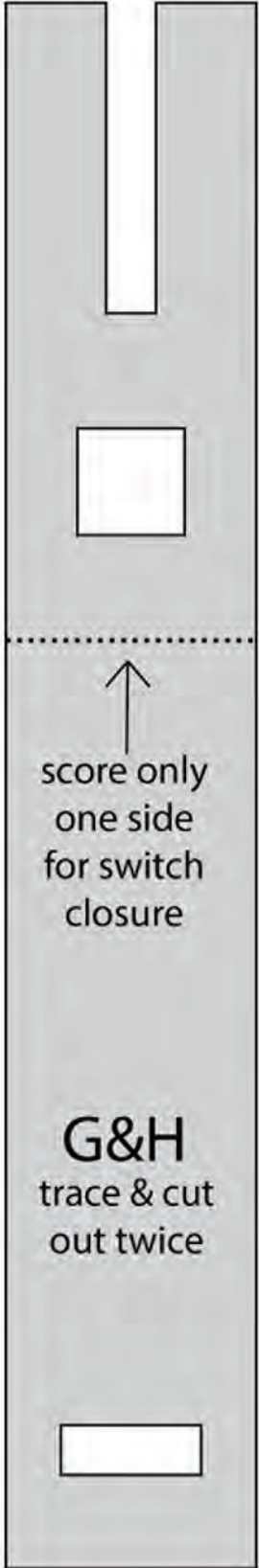
Slide G&H pieces into the remaining C slots. Make sure the battery pack is threaded through the middle and turn the switch side up so the switch closure can open and close for easy access. Glue tissue paper behind the teardrop cutouts on I&J pieces.

Nº5

Slide I&J pieces up through piece C on either side of the sword. Add a gem in the center of each I&J piece if desired. Glue K front and back pieces to the base of the sword for the finishing touch!



Sword
Template
for Tracing



I&J
trace & cut
out twice

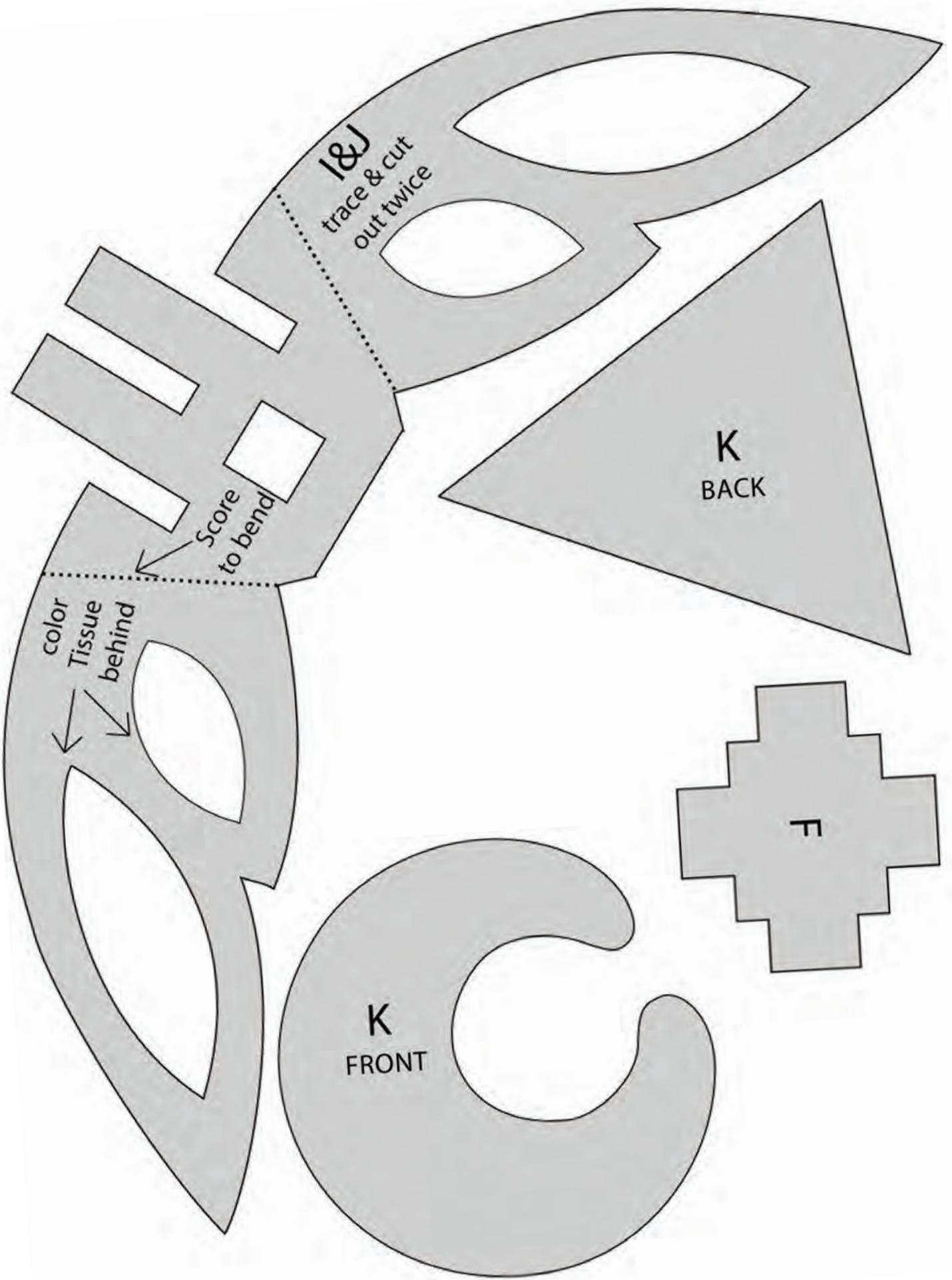
Score
to bend

color
Tissue
behind

K
BACK

K
FRONT

F





MCM LONDON COMIC CON



TEXT & IMAGES BY PAUL BOYLING

MCM was established in 2001 by Bryan Cooney (Wolf Events) and Paul Miley (Sci Fi Shows), who wanted to create a large-scale collector's show in London similar to their established Memorabilia shows in Birmingham. In May 2002, the 'London Expo' opened at the (then newly built) ExCeL exhibition centre in London's Royal Victoria Docklands.

Over the next few years, the London Expo flourished. In 2003, the show became a biannual event, taking place on the final weekends of both May and October respectively. In 2004, the Expo was re-branded as 'London MCM Expo' – the 'MCM' standing for 'Movies, Comics, Media'; and in 2005, the show completely changed from just a collectors' and autograph event into a US-style comic con – with an emphasis on cosplay and dedicated areas to comics, anime, manga and video-games plus film and TV content.

By 2010, the London show became the 'flagship' show amongst the others based in the UK, Northern Ireland and parts of Europe (Stockholm and Malmö, Sweden); not only running over a three-day period for the first time and hosting the inaugural EuroCosplay Championships, but also being re-branded as 'MCM Comic Con' – to be associated with and held in regard among its New York and San Diego counterparts, whilst still remaining faithful to a British audience.

In 2012, MCM London Comic Con continued to thrive, surpassing the 60,000 visitor mark. However, by 2014, attendance skyrocketed, with numbers at the May show topping 100,000 for the first time. 2015 and 2016 further confirmed MCM London Comic Con's meteoric rise, with back-to-back shows boasting 130,000 plus attendees at the seemingly permanent residence of the ExCeL centre; cementing its position as Britain's and Europe's leading pop culture festival as well as the third largest comic con in the world.



Guests at this year's con included: Donnie Yen (Ip Man; Rogue One: A Star Wars Story), Lou Ferrigno (The Incredible Hulk), Sam Jones (Flash Gordon), Verne Troyer (Austin Powers), as well as Sean Maher and Summer Glau (Firefly, Serenity). Four Mighty Morphin Power Rangers were also in attendance - Austin St. John (original Red Ranger), David Yost (original Blue Ranger), Karen Ashley (second Yellow Ranger) and Walter Emanuel Jones (original Black Ranger), in addition to Lt. Uhura herself, Nichelle Nichols (Star Trek). Billie Piper (Doctor Who; Diary of a Call Girl) was meant to appear, but had to cancel due to a family-related matter.









ALL ABOUT FOUNDATION

TEXT & IMAGES BY JESSICA WALSH



As cosplayers, our hobby centers around taking 2 dimensional characters and recreating them on a 3 dimensional body. Because of the fantastical worlds that exist in our media, it's no surprise that some of the shapes and designs our favorite characters flaunt don't exist in real life. So, we have to improvise. The thing you may not realize, though, is that not all of it is the costume. Sometimes it's what's under the costume that makes the difference - it's bigger on the inside, as the Whovians say. I've put together a couple of tips and tricks to help you on your way to bringing your favorite character to life.





NOT EVERYTHING HAS TO BE FUNCTIONAL

First and foremost, when creating your costume or assembling the pieces that will become your costume, keep in mind that not everything has to be the way it seems. For example: it may look like that Princess Tiana dress is one giant mass of green, but you can make the top separate from each skirt, and together, they will still create the look you're aiming for.

Another example? Zippers. Zippers can be hidden in almost any seam to make a piece easier to get into and if you see them on a character in abundance, remember they don't all have to work to achieve the same effect. Also, cheaper fabric can have a pattern to make it look like more expensive material that you may not know how to work with or have access to. Since cosplay is all about the illusion of a character being real, this goes doubly for the outfit itself. Experiment until it works for you and be creative. Just always remember to make a costume you can get in and out of and breathe in. It'll make the whole experience more enjoyable.



CORSETS DON'T JUST TRAIN

There's a stigma against corsets because many people know how they were used to alter women's bodies in the past. However, a corset is also a very functional piece of clothing and a great addition to any cosplayer's closet - as long as you get the right kind.

Overbust and underbust describe where the top of the corset stops and can make a big difference in how it fits on your body. Triangle inserts (or gussets) can provide extra support and shape. Sweetheart tops will emphasize a chest and flat front styles can help flatten your chest or emphasize smaller chests with an illusion of more cleavage. Corsets can be worn over or under your clothing, so one can be used on multiple costumes.

A quick note: always speak with a professional about the corset you're getting to ensure it's not one that will hurt you and that it fits your body type. It'll make the whole experience much more comfortable. Many conventions and Renaissance Festivals will have booths where you can try a variety on and decide what works best for you and your costumes.



HOOP SKIRTS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

We're all familiar with the poof of the perfect princess dress and how one twirl makes it look like they're making our fairytale dreams come true. This look - and most looks with skirts - is created by what's worn underneath. At its base, a skirt is multiple pieces of fabric that lay around the body in a certain way, so the shape can be easily altered. The real magic happens when you add that extra uumph underneath it. Yep, you too can look like you're on the way to your happily ever after - or, at the very least, giving a wedding cake topper a run for its money.

If you're unsure about what to put under your skirt, a good place to look is a wedding catalog for the wide variety of shapes available. You can also check out Halloween shops or even certain booths at a local convention, but if there's a bridal store near you? Go there and do research. Here are a few quick examples of what you will find out there: petticoats will poof out smaller skirts and can be layered on top of each other for extra effect. Hoops skirts come in circles, ovals, cones, and collapse easily into the pocket of your suitcase. Both come in a variety of lengths. Bustles will poof out specific parts of a skirt (like the back or sides) which will exaggerate specific areas of your cosplay. All of these can work to help you create the most epic of skirt shapes.



SHAPEWEAR AND COMPRESSION

Shapewear is generally a piece of underwear that is made of a thicker material to do more than just cover. It can be used to smooth out parts of your body, provide foundation and extra support where a costume might not be able to or to hide things you may not want to be noticed. Spanx is a well known brand for men and women consisting of several pieces. Compression shirts are also very useful and one of the safest methods for chest binding a cosplayer can use. For lower on your body check out leggings and dance belts, which help to smooth out skin and make certain parts of your anatomy less noticeable.

While some of these foundational pieces can cost quite a bit - especially if they are custom made - it's an expense that can be well worth it. The last thing you want to do is use a cheaper method (like ace bandages, duct tape or worse) and hurt yourself in the process.

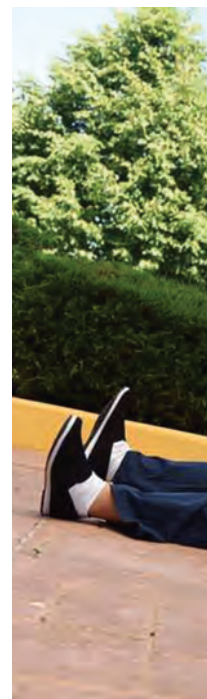
Cosplay is always about playing with shapes and bringing them to life. Sewing together the costume and 'outer' layer is only one piece. The components underneath your creation can make a huge difference in the final product. Sometimes, all it takes is the right hoop, corset, or strategically placed zipper to bring your favorite character onto the convention floor.

Anime St Louis

12 YEARS OF COS-FUN & COUNTING

TEXT BY JEREMY JOHNSON / IMAGES BY TOM RICKS

At the time of typing this up, it has been one month since Anime St. Louis 2017, the event's 12th year, occurred. It's always surreal being a con runner. Organizers spend a year planning a big nerdy celebration, and then in what feels like the longest yet fastest weekend, it's done. In my over 10 years of being involved in the convention circuit, it never fails to have my expectations of attendees be exceeded each year. Not just in support for our convention (of which, I am eternally touched and grateful for), but also in their creativity. Every event, I am blown away by attendees' love for their favorite shows and characters, as well as how they convert that passion into their cosplay creations. The plethora of characters at the event as well as the materials used to bring their costume to life is always astounding. No matter one's skill level, no matter whether the costume was created or bought, no matter anything, every cosplayer is at the convention having fun and being a part of the action. I hope you enjoy this small sampling of some of the cosplays we had this year at Anime St. Louis. Hopefully you can join us in 2018 on May 4-6 as we continue to gather in the Show Me State to show off our love for the characters that storytellers and artists have provided us with over the years. Keep up the great cosplay work everyone!







ARTIST PROFILE

MELANIE CHARRUT

MIDI-PYRENES, FRANCE

TRANSLATED BY MARIE DECAUMONT



Ever since I was a small child I liked drawing, but could never quite achieve what I would imagine; the results always seemed imperfect or unfinished. I started doing digital drawing at the age of 15, learning to use different tools and techniques with Paint and Photoshop. In the beginning it was only simple drawing, but eventually it became a passion. In college I learned 3D drawing, which gave me a broader range to realize the images that I wanted to create, but eventually, I still felt I never reached what I wanted to achieve in my profession; although my clients were always pleased, for me something was missing.

After constantly modifying objects and images and creating new environments at my job, I thought my own ideas could materialize the same way.

One evening at home, I started Photoshop and used some existing pictures to create a design that I had imagined the day before. This worked perfectly— I had at last found a way to express what I was feeling with images corresponding to my imagination. I began to manipulate the images, then people, to realize my ideas; I thus entered the world of the photomontage.

I first started with free images, and then made my own stock images by shooting friends. Little by little I created an image library that today allows me to create anything I desire! Since that moment I decided to make this passion into a job, and Photoshop became my best friend.







How do I proceed?

First I choose a subject, a word, or an idea, then a range of colors in cool or bright shades, and then look for related images in my image library. I look for cosplayers, artists, or volunteers to model for the picture in my design — working with models allows me to express more feelings in the image. I leave the models free to pose, move, and dress as they please; I rarely touch up the figure of the person. For me, every figure is perfect if it is integrated into an image—the only things I may touch up are lights, shadows, and contrasts.

Having chosen the character, I then create a corresponding background from my image libraries, while complying with intellectual property rules. (It is important when I use images I have not created to mention the name of the author.) After cutting out and arranging all the elements, I try to create a graphic harmony with the environment, lights, and colors, to complete the universe of my design.





NEW BEGINNING

"FOR ME, EVERY FIGURE IS PERFECT IF IT IS INTEGRATED INTO AN IMAGE. THE ONLY THINGS I MAY TOUCH UP ARE LIGHTS, SHADOWS, AND CONTRASTS."



THE SEE FUTURE

I like the idea of being able to create and modify, to put something in a new situation or create a reality that's appropriate, while still making it as realistic as possible. I have created movie posters with the faces of my friends, recreated old paintings with people from my family, and imagined scenes following an idea. I also like to create designs according to people's requests, which leads me to places and worlds I would never had discovered with pictures that I chose. This is the part I like most, because I don't know where my inspiration will lead me. To realize the universe of somebody else is fascinating because it allows you to go into their world and create it for him or her. It is the most beautiful of presents.

For my work in 3D I use modeling and rendering software such as 3ds Max, Maya, ZBrush, Blender, LightWave, Combustion, Unity, ShiVa, and Mudbox. For 2D, I use Photoshop, Flash, Dreamweaver, Vegas Studio, After Effects, and Illustrator. With photomontage, there is no limit — just you and your desires! I hope you will want to go to my universe and discover it with me.

Melanie can be contacted on Facebook:



Facebook.com/Rééartiste-photomontage

Believe
IN
You



A Quick Guide TO CROSSPLAY

TEXT BY NIGHT EYES



You're sitting down to watch an anime episode after a night spent sewing your newest costume. The episode starts, and that character appears: your favorite character. You marvel at the design, from the unique hairstyle to the fun and vibrant clothing. You sigh and say to yourself, "I love her so much, it's a shame I can't cosplay her though. I'd never be able to pull her off." If this sounds like something you've done, I've got some great news for you: You can totally pull her off. Or him. Or them. Is there a character you love but you're afraid you don't have the physical features necessary to cosplay them? Have you wanted to try cosplaying a character with a different gender presentation than yours but weren't sure where to start? Or maybe you crossplay regularly and are looking to improve your makeup or posing? Whatever your situation, I hope I can provide you with some helpful advice for transforming yourself into a character outside your typical presentation. We're going to cover everything from makeup to posing at lightning speed, so get ready to take notes and don't forget to practice!

For those newer to cosplay, "crossplay" is the combination of the word "crossdressing", the act of wearing clothing stereotypically used by the "opposite" gender, and "cosplay" (costume + play), in which the cosplayer chooses to portray a character of a gender that differs from their own. The wonderful thing about the cosplay community is its acceptance of all genders on the spectrum, and crossplay isn't reserved for cisgender men and women! It is easier to think of crossplay as portraying a different gender presentation, rather than a different gender identity. Regardless of your gender identity, it is still considered crossplay for a masculine presenting individual who may not identify as male to cosplay a female presenting character and vice versa. Not only is it fun to see yourself with different physical features, it can also help people who are questioning their gender try different presentations in a safe environment. For the purpose of keeping this article universally accessible and streamlined, I've broken it into two categories: Female to Male and Male to Female Crossplay. However, I use these categories as stereotypically recognized features and by no means as a way of excluding anyone outside the gender binary. Crossplay is for anyone, and if you don't think you can "pull off" a certain character, I would think again!

FEMALE TO MALE: We'll start things off with female to male crossplay. There are quite a variety of male character types in anime. Bishounen characters are one of the reasons female to male crossplay became so popular in Japan. Bishounen is a word used to refer to youthful, beautiful men whose physical features go beyond gender and sexuality. These characters usually have features that are more feminine than masculine, and some are simply androgynous, making them an easier choice for female cosplayers looking to become their favorite anime boy. Your makeup will be heavily influenced by the amount of

femininity in the character you choose. For example, Ferid Bathory, a villain from the show *Owari no Seraph*: he has a small, pointy jaw, heavier makeup and winged eye shape, defined waist and hips, and even more stereotypically feminine gestures and poses. Then there are characters like Archer from *Fate/Stay Night* who have mostly masculine features: defined muscles, strong jaws, a "lack" of makeup, and more masculine demeanor. Age will also affect makeup style. Younger boy characters tend to appear more feminine as they have softer and rounder features. A general rule of thumb for female to male makeup is to focus more on changing the face and body shape with shadows/highlights rather than applying makeup for aesthetic purposes. Matte, neutral colors will be utilized most, with the occasional exception of characters with obvious colorful makeup. Let's walk through a generic feminine to masculine crossplay makeup routine. See if you can spot these techniques used in the photo examples throughout the article!

FACE: Starting with your base, go for a face and eye primer without any shimmer or illuminating properties. Foundation will be applied the same for any gender, using a shade that is closest to your natural skin color. Conceal any blemishes or under eye circles with a concealer slightly darker than your skin tone, and if you use concealer for highlighting, use a matte color a few shades lighter than your skin. Highlighting for male characters will be dependent on your particular face shape, but generally you'll want to draw attention to the areas above where you contour. Remember, contour helps recede areas of the face you don't want to stand out by creating the illusion of a shadow, while highlighting draws attention to those areas you wish to be noticed. If you have a wide or tall forehead, contour the hairline to help diminish its appearance. Similarly, if you have a narrow face shape, focus on highlighting all the high points of your face to help them stand out and appear wider. Think of facial contouring similarly to shading an object in drawing or painting. Use a reference photo of your character and put the contour color anywhere there is shadow on their face. If they have more shadow under their cheek bones than you do naturally, or more light areas in their forehead, this is where you exaggerate it to create a new shape!

EYES: In general you will want to work with a neutral color palette, with colors closer to the cooler side than warm, since contouring is all about creating believable shadows. Most male characters have deeper eye sockets and lower set eyebrows. Feminine male characters typically have highly arched, thin eyebrows, whereas the masculine male characters have straighter, thicker brows. For both cases you'll want to draw the beginning of your brow closer to your eyelid than usual. The best place to start contouring is directly underneath the eyebrow in a triangular shape towards the nose bridge. This will create a deeper set eye and give more intensity to the character. I do this even with



characters that are more feminine. If your eyes are naturally upturned, applying shadow to the outside edges can help straighten them into a more masculine shape. A defined crease is helpful for changing the shape and creating an illusion for a deeper eye socket. If you have a naturally deep crease, you can accentuate it with a bit of dark shadow. For monolids or eyes with a more subtle crease, eyelid tape, eyelid glue, or even drawing a new crease with eyeshadow are options. For any areas that weren't contoured, use shades close to your skin tone to cover veins or redness, and highlight the outside of the brow bone with a light matte shade to help the brows stand out. When it comes to choosing circle lenses, if you wear them, try to find a diameter closer to your natural iris, which is 14.0. Enlarging 14.5-15.0 circle lenses can make you appear a lot younger and/or innocent, and are best used for child characters, or characters with youthful faces, like Nagisa from *Free!* or Honey from *Ouran High School Host Club*. If you have naturally light eyelashes and wish to darken them, a quick trick is apply your mascara on top of your eyelashes in a downward motion, instead of under them in the traditional upward motion. You can also use false lashes for some male characters; just flatten them carefully with a low heat setting flat iron so they give natural thickness rather than exaggerated length.

NOSE: For the nose you have many options depending on your natural shape. In general, if your nose is wide, contour the sides of

the nostrils to slim it down, and just under the tip to help it stick out more. If you are cosplaying a rugged or roughed up character, you can even use contouring to change the shape of your nose bridge to reflect a previously broken nose or a "bump". And if your nose has bumps or the bridge is very prominent, you can contour the sides of the nose to flatten or slim it down. Always make sure to blend nose contouring very thoroughly or it will look more like dirt than a shadow. Start with a small amount of color and gradually build the color; it is easier to blend color in layers than to try and erase too much color in one area.

LIPS: There is a trend in the cosplay community involving male character lips, particularly in crossplay. Because anime characters are often drawn without a lip color, a common trick had been to apply concealer on the lips when cosplaying a male to make them appear more masculine. However, many photographers I've talked to have said they have to add color back into the lips in photoshop because their models tend to look washed out or "dead". Not to mention concealer is extremely drying and can create unsightly lines in your lips throughout the day. It is also the quickest way to erase expression in photos. If you happen to have a very red or pink lip naturally, I would instead choose a neutral beige-nude lip product and apply it at the center of your lips and feather it out instead of using a concealer or light nude product. It is better to focus on changing the shape with contouring than to block out the lips entirely. Try shading under the bottom lip and use a slightly darker color across the top lip to give definition while keeping the colors neutral. Masculine lips in anime tend to be flatter than feminine lips so you can also extend the color further out to create that look. If you have a prominent cupid's bow, a bit of concealer is appropriate to block it out.

CHEEKS: You will want to contour your cheek bones in a sharp diagonal down your face starting at the bone protruding next to your ear and ending somewhere near the outer corner of your lip. If you are unsure where to contour, suck in your cheeks and feel for the hollows under the cheek bones. Don't be afraid to go heavier with this, but make sure it is blended very well, especially as it gets closer to the mouth. Choose shades that are as neutral as possible, erring slightly on the cooler side rather than warm. Warm colors can make your face look dirty or bronzed, which is great for creating a "roughed up" look or adding color back to your face, but ineffective for creating shadows. If your character has a squared jaw and very defined cheek bones (think Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Terminator*) then you can contour in a more ninety degree triangle shape.

JAW: Next you'll probably need to reshape the jaw. If your character has a pointier jaw, concentrate the color at the tip of your chin and work up the side of the jaw bone. For squarer chins, apply the color straight across the bottom, and you can even add a little triangle for that "butt chin" appearance. If your

character is very masculine, take a bit of contour color on your neck where the Adam's apple would be. Use the darker color on the bottom, and highlight directly above it to make it stand out. If your character sports a cool mustache or beard, there are many tutorials on the internet for creating stubble with makeup, and theatrical facial hair pieces are available to purchase or make yourself. You can also use these for characters with extremely bushy eyebrows or for hairy chests!

Over the years my makeup has drastically changed for crossplay, and after discussing with friends, we've realized that the "less is more" mentality really works best for female to male crossplay. Where we might have used heavy black liquid liner to define our eyelid shape in the past, now we choose a dark brown eyeshadow and subtly line the eyes instead. For characters with obvious makeup this gets a bit trickier, so it's always best to test for each character. A character like Kise from Kuroko's Basketball for instance would warrant heavier winged eyeliner as it is a distinguishing facial trait. Don't be afraid to experiment with different techniques until you find something you like the most with your features.

For a truly believable crossplay, we don't stop at the face. Makeup can be applied on the body as well, and there are many accessories that can be used to create a more masculine silhouette. In terms of makeup, if your neck, chest, arms, or abs are visible, these are all areas that can be contoured and highlighted. Accentuate muscles down the side of the neck, bulk up your biceps, add depth to your open chest binding (discussed more later) and even draw a set of 6 pack abs. When creating abs keep in mind they will look the most convincing if you have visible muscle structure to start with, but it's still possible to

do on skin if you blend well! You'll want to contour around the bottom edges of each abdominal muscle, and highlight in the middle. You can do the same to create the "V" shape in the hips as well. If you want to achieve a realistic effect with less effort, there are sites that sell male (and female) torsos. These are sometimes pre-painted, or you can paint them yourself. They are ideal for characters with open shirts, and if you don't plan to take pictures from the back, they are a good choice for swimsuit or shirtless cosplays as well.

BINDING/PADDING: How much binding or padding you use will be relative to the measurement differences of your body. All of these are optional and it is still possible to crossplay without them! Generally, masculine figures are straighter, with minimal difference between the waist and hips. Muscular characters will have the "upside down Dorito" effect, meaning their shoulders are the widest and the waist and hips are narrower (Think of the swimming boys in Free!). You can pad out your shoulders under your clothes with a variety of materials, from fabric batting to pad inserts for bikini tops, or muscle shirts that you can purchase or modify yourself. This will depend on the outfit of the character, and the opacity of the material, and won't be the case for all male characters, so reference your character's silhouette each time and adjust accordingly. When choosing pants, even for characters that wear skinny jeans, try shopping in the men's section, as their pants are tailored to accommodate more in the hip area, and won't cling to your body and show off your hips the way female pants do. For some characters it will be better to wear the pants higher up to conceal a curvier waist, and for others it will be better to wear pants lower on the waist to elongate the torso. Choose appropriate patterns for clothing if you



intend to sew them yourself, as commercial patterns can have differences based on gender.

Probably the most talked about aspect of female to male crossplay is binding, but this is not a necessary component and will not apply to all people who identify as female. This article is meant to be a quick guide, so make sure to do extra research before pursuing binding yourself. Binders can be purchased and worn relatively comfortably for a duration of time and work to flatten the breasts into a more masculine shape. Even if you have larger breasts, professionally made binders are perfectly safe to use when bought in the correct size and used for the recommended amount of time. That being said, it is always best to listen to your body and remove the binder if it becomes hard to breathe or painful in any way. If your breast size is smaller than a B cup naturally, you may be able to get away with compression sports bras, layered sports bras, or no bra at all, depending on the tightness of the clothing. Do not attempt to use ACE bandages for binding, as they are meant to compress while worn, which will restrict breathing, and can cause physical side effects like cracked ribs. If your character wears a vest or a button down shirt that is left undone, open chest binding is an option. This should only be done if your natural breast size is a B cup or below, and is not safe to do on larger chest sizes. As with normal binding, listen to your body and remove any tape if it becomes painful or hard to breathe. The concept of open chest binding is to use skin friendly medical tape to pull the skin of the chest up and out to flatten it. Once it is complete, contouring and highlighting can create the appearance of peck muscles. There are many tutorials online for open binding, but under no circumstances should you ever attempt to use tape that isn't medical grade and skin tested. Duct tape should never make contact with the skin, and is not an option for binding.

So your makeup is complete, you've created a silhouette you are happy with, and now it's time to take some photos. Turns out you're not done yet, as the final piece of the puzzle is expression and posing. As I mentioned in the very beginning, this article is focusing on stereotypical physical traits, and that extends to expression and posing as well. Posture and gesticulation do not

have a gender; a smile is not male or female. However, there are universally agreed upon behaviors in media that are considered feminine or masculine, and are often exaggerated with animated characters. When in doubt, the best thing you can do is behave as your character would, without considering their gender. If you know Viktor Nikiforov would wink and smile wide at the camera, do not worry if that is not considered masculine enough, it will be believable because it is in line with the character's personality. Consider their place in the source material as well. Are they the villain? Do they play a sport? Are they the class clown? Do they prefer to lead or follow? All of these things will help you determine the best expressions and poses. In general,

masculine poses are meant to take up space. Use a wider stance when standing, spread your legs more when sitting, and cross your legs with your ankle over the thigh, rather than knee over knee. If the character is powerful, use stronger action poses, clenched fists, furrowed brows. If the character has more feminine qualities, work to extend the fingers, cock a hip, or soften the expression. You can't go wrong if you stay true to the character!

MALE TO FEMALE: As mentioned earlier with male characters, there are quite a few types of female characters in anime as well. Just as with female to male makeup, the amount and type you apply will depend on your facial features and those of the character you choose. What differs in male to female makeup is the addition of makeup as makeup, rather than simply changing the

features with contouring and highlighting. If you have never played with feminine styled makeup before, I would suggest watching some beauty gurus on YouTube to get a feel for the basics. Try to find a makeup artist that looks similar to you in terms of skin tone, eye shape, and facial structure, even if you do not share the same gender presentation. A lot of the best tips and tricks for creating feminine features on masculine faces can be found with drag queens. Familiarize yourself with their techniques and practice, practice, practice!

FACE: If you have facial hair, decide before you start if you'd like to shave it or cover it. There are plenty of tutorials for covering



eyebrows and facial hair, so choose the method you like best. You will most likely want to block your eyebrows entirely and redraw them, so do this before you apply your foundation. With feminine characters you can choose to use a matte primer, or a primer with illuminating or highlighting properties, as the shimmer can add a bit of dewy finish to your foundation and give a more delicate appearance. Apply foundation the same way you would normally. Contouring and highlighting is just as important for male to female as it is for female to male. However the focus will shift to highlighting more than contouring. Concentrate your highlight in the center of your face: your forehead, nose bridge, tip of the nose, under the eyes, highest points of the cheeks, and center of the chin. This will soften the harsher features and round the face out. Contouring can be used to reshape the jaw, slim the forehead, and slim the nose, but most likely won't be as heavy in the hollows of the cheeks; instead bronzer or blush can be used to bring color to the face without accentuating deep cheek bones.

EYES: The eyes are where you will be spending most of your time. After blocking your brows (or shaving them if you prefer), make sure to draw them thinner, more arched, and higher on your face than usual. This will open up your eyes and give you more space to work with shadows. With masculine makeup the goal was to narrow the eyes and create depth, but with feminine makeup the goal is to highlight and open the eyes. Don't be afraid to use shimmery colors, and make sure the lightest colors are concentrated on the inner corner. Use darker shadows in the crease and outer cor-



ners of the eyes. It is up to you what colors you use, but a good choice is usually to compliment the eye color or wig/costume colors. If you are wearing bright blue lenses for example, try for warmer copper tones. If your costume is pastel and light, don't go for a heavy smoky eye. Anime characters don't really wear makeup, so you have creative freedom here to choose whatever colors look best for you. I gravitate towards soft pinks and browns with shimmery cream highlights for my feminine makeup. If your eyes are naturally straight, apply eyeliner in a winged shape to lift them. The saving grace of all feminine makeup is false lashes. They can turn an eyeliner disaster into a masterpiece, and if your eyeshadow isn't quite blended perfectly, they'll hide that too. Choose a pair with both length and volume, and apply them as close to your natural lashes as possible. Lower lashes are optional; if you choose to use them try cutting them in half and only using the outer half first to see if you need the inner portion.

NOSE: With a few exceptions, most of the time the goal with the nose is to create a slimmer, gently sloping shape. If the character is particularly young or otherworldly (fairy, pixie, elf, etc.) you can add contour in a circular shape around the tip of the nose, and finish with a highlight right in the center to create an upturned shape. Make sure to highlight the bridge of the nose, and keep the contouring very blended and light on the sides.

LIPS: When it comes to lips, a little overdrawn is not a bad thing. Use a neutral lip liner and draw a new lip shape, focusing on a defined cupid's bow, and fuller lower lip. To make the lips appear really full, use a darker lip color on the outer edges and highlight in the center of the lips. The color depends on the aesthetic of the character. Sometimes a lip stain is more appropriate than a bold red lipstick, so experiment and decide what works best with the rest of the makeup. Highlight the top of the cupid's bow with a shimmery eyeshadow or highlighter.

CHEEKS: Blush can be used to distinguish a "sexy" character from a "cute" character. If you are cosplaying a youthful female, opt for blush on the apples of the cheeks, and you can even add some to the outer edge of your eyes or across the nose. If the character is more mature, choose a blush that is slightly darker and apply it heavier on the outside of the face in the same place you'd normally contour and fade it in diagonally. You can add bronzer directly underneath and slightly overlapping it as well. Choose a highlight product and apply it across the highest points of your cheekbones, typically above the blush. Shimmer helps draw attention to the highlight and reflects nicely in photos as well. Go for something subtly shimmery instead of visible glitter flakes.

JAW: Similarly to the rest of the face, you will want to round out the jaw, especially around the outer edges. Some female characters have prominent jaws but they are typically slimmer in appearance from masculine jaws. With a light hand, contour

your jaw and apply highlight generously above it to pull the eye to the softer features.

And as I'm sure you've guessed, we don't stop with the face here either. To bring a more delicate appearance to the neck, collar bones, and shoulder area, apply highlight to the tops of the collar bones, and contour in the hollows to help them stand out. Depending on how much of the chest is covered by clothing, you can also contour and highlight to create believable cleavage. In terms of creating a feminine silhouette, refer to the character you have chosen first. While masculine characters have similar sized hips and waist, feminine characters have similar sized shoulders and hips, and a smaller waist.

How much you need to pad out your hips will depend on how big your shoulder to hip ratio is naturally. Some characters may have a more straight lined body shape, or even a pear shape where the hips are wider than the shoulders and waist. Shape wear is great for layering over padding to keep everything in place, and also helps smooth the appearance of multiple bras. If you intend to create the appearance of a feminine chest, there are plenty of tutorials available for layering and padding bras, creating attachable breasts from scratch, or buying them online similarly to the male torsos mentioned earlier. Drag queen tutorials will be a great resource for this as well as padding clothing for a feminine silhouette. If you have leg hair and do not wish to shave, but desire a smooth look, skin tone dance tights are a great option and will also shape the legs nicely. Wearing shoes with a heel or inserting lifts into flat shoes will help elongate the legs, but if you don't want to add to your height you can also wear pants or skirts higher on your waist to create the illusion of longer legs.

As with male characters, how you pose will be dependent on the character's personality coupled with stereotypically feminine stances and expressions. Arms should be held out slightly bent, with graceful and long fingers. Utilize the $\frac{3}{4}$ pose and make sure to raise shoulders and hips in opposite directions to create an S curve and accentuate a feminine figure. Shift your balance from front to back or side to side to add dimension to



your photos, and when sitting keep the legs crossed at the ankles or knee over knee. Expressions can range from cute peace signs and smiles to seductive eyes and a smirk. When in doubt, always do what you think fits the character first, and do not worry about what is masculine or feminine.

A quick note about body shape and silhouette: by no means is it necessary to have the body of a competitive swimmer to crossplay Haru from Free!, nor is it a rule to lean more towards androgyny or naturally feminine features to crossplay a Disney Princess. The same goes for cosplay of any kind. Makeup is a wonderful tool, but always remember that anime characters are 2D, and it is impossible to look just like them in the real world.

Your end goal should not be to perfectly portray a character in physique and gender appearance, but instead to try a new side of cosplay and show your love for the character, the series, or the costume itself. However you choose to cosplay is always good enough, and your natural appearance should not deter you from any character you want to dress up as.

At the end of the day, there is no "wrong" way to crossplay. As long as you are comfortable and enjoy portraying the character, you're golden! The lines between what is generally accepted as masculine and feminine are starting to blend even in the animation world, and there are quite a few exceptions to the norm. This article is a merely a starting place, with plenty of room to experiment and think outside the box. There are resources

and tutorials in the community that go into more detail about specific aspects, like binding or creating a specific silhouette, and you will also find helpful information within the drag queen and transgender communities that are applicable to cosplay. Make sure to always be respectful of these communities and the information they share.

A very special thank you to all my cosplay and photographer friends for sharing their photos and advice; I hope it was helpful to see more than just my face for reference! Have fun, and good luck with your next crossplay!

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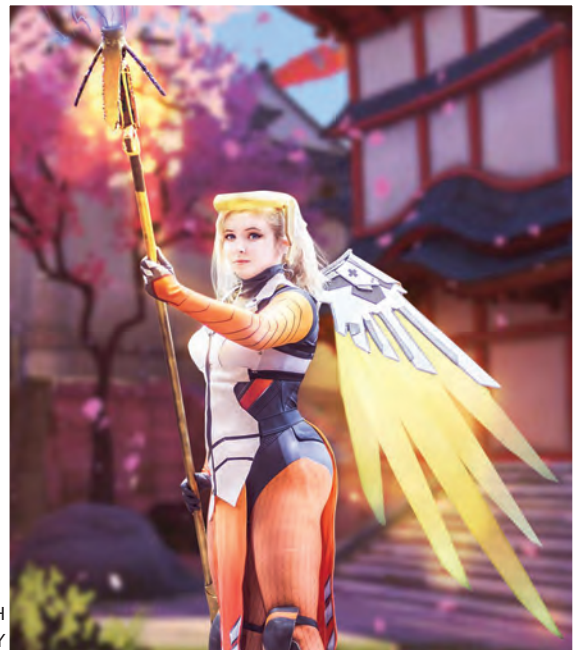
Charles Edward Mason II



CHARACTER: KRANKSHAFT
PHOTO BY: DEREK DISHMAN

Trolltastic Tiffie

CHARACTER: MERCY FROM OVERWATCH
PHOTO BY: MOMO CLICKS PHOTOGRAPHY



Snowblind Cosplay



CHARACTER: EREN YEAGER FROM ATTACK ON TITAN
PHOTO BY: MAUREEN PHOTOGRAPHY

OscuroLupo Cosplay



CHARACTER: WIDOWMAKER FROM OVERWATCH
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Yokaze Cosplay

CHARACTER: SONA FROM LEAGUE OF LEGENDS
PHOTO BY: CHISELED LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

MEGA CON

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JASON LABOY



Orlando, Florida is known for many things, most notably sunshine, Universal Studios Theme Park and, of course, Disney World. However, when May rolled around this year Orlando became synonymous with MegaCon 2017...and it was, well, mega!

This year's show included a star-studded lineup of special guests ranging from blockbuster films, hit TV shows, voice actors and comic book icons. Walk the convention hall and you could stop in to say hello to everyone from rock legend Alice Cooper to classic Rocky Horror stars — Tim Curry, Meat Loaf, Barry Bostwick — to up-and-coming actors Caleb McLaughlin and Gaten Matarazzo from the Netflix hit series Stranger Things.

However, for many (including myself) the guest of honor was comic book legend Stan Lee who was making his final ever appearance at Megacon. In fact, on my first day at the convention, I was able to spend a bit of time with Stan so I could deliver a few copies of the latest issue of Cosplay Culture — featuring the legend himself on the cover along with my image of Spiderman cosplayer Trevor Ray.

Professionally it was a defining moment when Stan's face registered amazement as I explained how I photographed the hanging Spiderman and incorporated it onto the cover shot.

When Stan Lee compliments your work with words like, "WOW, that is amazing!" it is something you will never forget, and I never will.

Although Stan was the highlight of the event, I would be remiss not to mention that top notch cosplay guests were also on hand with the likes of Yaya Han, Nicole Marie Jean and Soni Aralynn and the cosplay event was nothing short of amazing! The contest was capped off with 65 registered entrants but also included an additional 75 contestants as "walk ons", with all being eligible for a host of cash prizes and bragging rights!

MegaCon returns to Florida in the fall of 2017 at the Tampa Bay Convention Center. So, be sure to keep a look out for details and celebrity guests slated to attend. See you in Tampa!



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