

FUTURE TIMES

Costuming for SF Conventions by Anne Brunsgaard

Have you ever thought about doing a costume for a con? Maybe dreamed of getting up on stage and competing or just showing off your work and being someone else for a day. Now that Dragon Con's sadly over for this year, you should have plenty of time to get something ready for next year, or maybe even for Chattacon. Here, for your benefit and edutainment, I've written down my advice from the experiences I've had over the last several years.

I won't go into all the reasons people make or wear costumes, it's personal and different for everyone. I never much thought about it but if I had to pin it down I'd have to say my motivation is probably pretty similar to most people's. I do costumes based on characters I like or admire. Someone once asked me if I chose to do a costume because it was opposite to my personality or if I chose it because it represented a part of my personality. To be honest, I'd never thought about it. I do know that if I don't like a character, I won't want to portray them, but that's pretty obvious. In short, don't question your motivations, just make whatever costume you want to make and do the best you can. I feel that I have an obligation to do the absolute best job I can in honor of the character. Oh, and don't tell anyone at work you do this, they'll secretly think you're a freak. I found this out the hard way.

All right, now I'll attempt to give you an overview of the process from inspiration through perspiration

to realization. First, there's your idea. I usually get mine like lightning out of nowhere. I may have liked the character before but suddenly the idea of making a costume of it is irresistible. Go with your gut on this one. It's usually not hard to get an idea, if it is then you're not listening to what you really want.

Second, you should think about the feasibility of your project. You may want to go to the Con looking like Diva Plavalaguna from *The Fifth Element*, but unless you're an expert in prosthetic molding and can sew 8 yards of blue latex into a dress, forget it. This is true for physical shape as well. Be realistic about your body and how well it matches the character's physical features. Next issue in feasibility is - can you get the materials you need? Make a list and then do some hunting. I usually spend about a month investigating the feasibility of my project.

Next step is planning. I usually list all the elements in the costume like dress, shoes, wigs, etc. then I list if they're going to be made (by me or someone else) or bought and if bought where I can get them. Then it's on to gathering materials. This can be the most time consuming part of the job, at least for perfectionists like me. I have to take at least 2 months on this step, usually more. The less fussy you are the less time it'll take. And, by the way, being fussy or not fussy is just a style issue, in the end it's you who have to be happy with how you look. Local fabric and craft shops are al-

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Aug 2001 ASFS Meeting Minutes

Taken by Lewis Murphy, ASFS Secretary

The meeting was called to order by President Bob Goodfriend at 2:20 p.m. There were 15 individuals in attendance. Treasurer Jayne Rogers reported a balance of \$253 in the ASFS account.

It was announced that next year's Sci-Fi Summer will be held the weekend of July 5th-7th. A DragonCon update was given, with the cancellation of *Glass Hammer's* appearance. It was

announced there would be no meeting in September, due to a conflict with DragonCon. Secretary Lewis Murphy distributed ASFS bookmarks & business cards. Secretary Murphy also distributed new membership cards.

Following the business portion of the meeting, ASFS defeated *Dark Shadows Over Atlanta* in a SF/Fantasy/Horror Trivia contest. A rematch is planned.

Runaway Star

By Jan Sides

Runaway stars are massive stars traveling rapidly through interstellar space. Like a ship plowing through the interstellar medium, runaway star HD 77581 has produced this graceful arcing bow wave or "bow shock" - compressing the gaseous material in its path, similar to that caused by a boat moving through water. Located near the center of this European Southern Observatory photograph, HD 77581 itself is so bright that it saturates the sensitive camera and produces the spiky cross shape. This star is over 6,000 light-years away in the constellation Vela, and appears to move at over 50 miles per second.

What force could set this star in motion? A clue to the answer may lie in its optically invisible companion star, an X-ray bright pulsar known as Vela X-1. This pulsar is

clearly the remnant of a supernova explosion - which seems to have given this massive star and its companion a mighty kick!

Photo Credit: L. Kaper et. al. (ESO)



ASFS Officer Roll Call

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Costuming For Conventions (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

ways the first place to look of course, but the internet is also a great resource for harder to find items. I also use the Whole Costumer's Catalog, which has hundreds of companies listed that specialize in costume supply. It's well worth the price of the catalog (about \$30) and can save a lot of time.

And finally we get to actually making the costume. For me, the biggest concern I had was that my sewing abilities are very limited. You may have other doubts about your own abilities, but don't let that stop you. I learn something new with every costume I make and my creativity and problem solving skills always get a good workout too. That's one of the things that I love about costuming. If you really aren't able to do something, don't be afraid to farm it out, but try to keep that to a minimum in some cases it's important that a competition costume be made mostly by you. If you don't care about that, than by all means get help. To start, get a reference picture or video, it's probably the most useful item you can have. Refer to it often. I've also found that proportion is very important, step back from your work, try it on often in front of a mirror and compare it to your reference picture. Also, wear it in front of a friend and ask their honest opinion, you can get too used to seeing it and lose perspective.

Now that you're ready to enter the competition, let me tell you what backstage is like. First of all, find out where you're supposed to be before the competition and when you're supposed to be there. Be there on time!! I've seen people unable to compete because they were late. There's a lot of contestants and they don't usually mind bumping a few cuts down on time. Also, before you go backstage, find a friend to be a runner for you. That way, if you forget something important they can run and get it for you, cause when you're backstage there's no leaving. Usually there will

be people there to help you, at DragonCon they're called den mothers. They'll get you water, tell you what to expect and make sure you get out on stage okay. At DragonCon, they do a kind of photo shoot backstage of each person's costume. This can be lots of fun; vamp it up, make suggestions, don't be shy. Try finding the best poses and angles in a mirror first, these photos are put on the DC website so you want to look your best. Finally you'll be assigned a number and line up to go onstage. This is the hardest part for some people. If you're like me, your heart will be pounding, you'll be just freaked. Remember, it'll be over soon and you'll be sitting in the audience or back behind the stage again watching the next poor schmuck come out onstage looking like a deer in headlights. Then, there's the agonizing wait while they choose winners. Some cons, like Chattacon, are nice and usually give everyone a small prize and a category of their own if they don't actually win but some, like DragonCon, are big so there's only a few categories to go round. I guess all I can say about this is winning isn't the most important part. It's very, very nice but it's not the most important part. What really matters are the compliments and the notice you get in addition to knowing you did a great job and just have fun doing it. Because really, costuming should be for yourself and you should do it because you enjoy it. That's why I costume.

All in all, I'd say if you want to you can start small on costuming for Cons. Do a fairly easy costume and debut it at a small event like Chattacon. If you want to get an idea of what to expect (beyond this article) you might try being a den mother at Dragon. It's a good way to get a behind the scenes view without having to go out on stage and they can always use volunteers. Whatever you choose to do, best of luck and I know you'll do a great job!

Upcoming Area Conventions

October 2001

Oct 19-21: Constellation 20- Huntsville, AL. GoH: David Mattingly, Steve and Sue Francis, John Varley. Info.: constell@con-stellation.org; Web- www.con-stellation.org

Oct 21: Brain & Wendy Froud Signing- Chapter 11 Discount Bookstore, Snellville, GA. **CANCELLED.**

Oct 26-28: Necronomicon 20- Radisson Sable Park, Tampa, FL. GoH: Orson Scott Card, Walter John Williams, Timothy Zahn. Memberships: \$30 ATD. Info.: PO Box 2076, Riverview, FL 33568; Web- www.stonehill.org/necro.htm

November 2001

Nov. 9-11: Tropicon 20- Clarion Hotel, Hollywood, FL. GoH: Lois McMaster Bujold, Robert J. Sawyer, Jean Pierre Targete, Adam-Troy Castro, Rick Wilbur. Memberships: \$25 until 10/31, then \$28. Info.: PO Box 70143, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307; 561/844-6336; tropicon@sfsfs.org; Web- sfsfs.org/Tropicon/Tropicon20.htm



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Future Times

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ASFS ONLINE

ASFS maintains an E-mail mailing list hosted by Yahoo! Groups. Anyone who is interested may join by directing their web browser to:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ASFS>

Beyond the mailing list, our YAHOOgroups site has a calendar which lists our upcoming club and local SF events, as well as a new database for SF VHS and DVD offerings for our Movie Night. Any member of the ASFS news list may view and add to these. This site is also where member polls are originated and voted on.

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