Cosplayer Diary – Who Are You?

Costume – check. Convention tickets – check. Hotel and transportation – check. Now comes the fun part: to be the character you are cosplaying. To me, this is second only to the costume itself in terms of importance in regards to cosplay.

Research is the key in trying to define who you are going to be, and how others will perceive you when in costume. There are so many tools out there to use in crafting your persona, from the television, film or comic book the character might come from, and of course the internet as well. When I decided to cosplay Black Panther from Marvel Comics fame, I was already a fan of the comic book and took the design from the run done by Ken Lashley and Reggie Hudlin. But, a comic book was just one dimension of the character that I had at my disposal. I wanted to see how T’Challa walked, talked, and gestured.

My process when I’m in costume is not simply to emulate the physical attributes, but also to embody their spirit and personality. To make any character believable, this is a must, but it also needs to be open to interpretation. I have seen just as many over-the-top cosplayers in regards to being in-character as I have seen cosplayers with no commitment whatsoever.

The most important thing, I believe, when choosing a character, is to make sure both the costume and the character themselves are in your personality wheelhouse. If you’re an introvert who’s not super comfortable around crowds or being the center of attention, maybe Deadpool – who is anything *but* that – might not be the best character for you in order to get the feedback you desire. That said, plenty of characters have alternate versions of them (especially in comic books), and a little research can potentially bring up a different version of a character that would be better suited for your personality.

To make your character believable, if that’s what you want to do, you have to do your homework and know what they like and don’t like, their catchphrases, and so on. A good example of this: a friend of mine cosplays Black Bolt, a member of the Inhumans, who is known for remaining mostly silent as his voice triggers massively destructive shockwaves. So, when he’s in costume, he won’t say a single word, and if he needs to talk he’s sure to remove the mask to mentally break that fourth wall a bit. This might seem small and insignificant to some, but to many it’s a total commitment to the character.

The devil is in the detail when it comes to your character, and the very same way that you seek out research material for the character’s appearance and costume itself can be used for learning their mannerisms. Your main ingredient when deciding how to cosplay a character should be finding what about that character works within your personality, and if there are any aspects about them that would require you to step out of your comfort zone. With so many tools at our fingertips these days, thanks to technology, we have the opportunity to look beyond the pages of a comic book and, along with our imagination, shape and mold our character into the ideal representation of who we want them to be.

*-Eddie Newsome*