**WHO ARE YOU (establishing and maintaining your identity?)**

Costume…check, Convention tickets…check, Hotel…check, Transportation…check, now comes the fun part how to be the person you are cosplaying. This is by far one of the most important this only #2 to the costume itself. 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 with the internet, comics, television and movies out there. When I decided to cosplay Black Panther from Marvel comics 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 is one dimension that was at my disposal, I needed to see how T’Challa walked, his gestures, how he talked and his gestures. This is my process when I am in costume to emulate not the just physical attributes of my character but also their spirt and personality. To make your character believable this is a must but, it can be a double edged sword that needs to be open and edited to interpretation. I have seen too many “over the top” cosplayers while in character just like I’ve seen cosplayers with no commitment whatsoever. The most important thing is to make sure the costume and character you choose is in your personality wheelhouse. You’re an introvert and not comfortable around crowds and attention maybe Deadpool who is anything but that might not be a character you can cosplay successfully to get the con feedback you desire. I take issue with this because a little research can show you there are different versions that can fit into who you are and what you want to convey. The key word is RESEARCH, to make your character believable you have to do your homework and know what they like, what they don’t like, catch phrases, who they are. I have a friend who cosplays Black Bolt from the Inhumans and won’t say a single word when in costume but, when he does he’ll walk away with the person and take off the mask to mentally break the 4th wall and stay in character. This may seem small and insignificant to some but to most it’s total commitment to the character which is paramount in cosplay. The devil is in the detail when it comes to your character, the very same way that you seek out research material for the appearance there are many avenues you can take on how you can “be” the character as well. With so many tools at our hands we have the opportunity to look beyond the pages and along with our imagination shape and mold our character into the ideal representation of who want to be. I was at Megacon in Orlando, FL and saw a young cosplayer dressed as Ace Ventura in the pink tutu scene and he was diving over bushes our side, doing the band march and sitting down on his head like in the movie as well as the voice and physical mannerisms. When he was at the con he was a hit and the reason being he committed and saw what made Ace tick and what aspects of him he was able to transfer to himself. This is the main ingredient in when deciding how to be who you are cosplaying as, finding what about that character works within your personality and what aspects are you comfortable with stepping out of your comfort zone to take on.