

Silicon Web Costumers' Guild

Silicon Web Staff

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President's Message Kevin Roche*

First, a big thanks to the VC editors for their forbearance and patience in holding this issue for my column. I promised I'd get it to them in time for it to actually be a May issue, but it was by the skin of my teeth.

The reason, of course, is the upcoming Westercon 66, July 4-7, at the Hilton Arden West in Sacramento, California. If you are a new reader, or missed earlier announcements, my husband Andy and I are the co-chairs of this year's convention, the oldest general SF convention in the North American West. I believe a majority of our staff are costumers (and many of those are SiWeb members), including Phil and Kathe Gust as Masquerade Directors, and Christine Doyle as Program head, so you can be sure costuming will be quite a visible part of the

conference. We've got John and Bjo Trimble as Costuming Special Guests, one room specifically set aside for make/costume program items, and our special Music Friday closes with the first ever convention appearance of science fiction rockabilly band The Phenomenauts. It's going to be an AWESOME weekend; if you haven't joined yet, why not? Find out more details at <http://www.westercon66.org>.

I built my first fursuit, Torve the Trog, in 1985 for Costume-Con 3, before I'd ever even heard the terms "fursuit" or "furry." Back in those days Ben Camacho and Darren Bost were inspiring many of us all with their impeccable work; search on their

names in the ICG Pat and Peggy Kennedy archives for the evidence!

While I don't often build creature costumes (the other two in my repertoire are Conrad T Lizard and, arguably, the Tiki Dalek), I am a regular and dedicated member of Further Confusion, the San Francisco Bay Area's January furry convention. It's one of my must-go-to conventions, and Andy and I always have a blast there. It goes out of its way to be a family-friendly experience, and watching the fursuiters play with fans of all ages is one of its charms (There is plenty of space for grown-up weirdos like me, too, I'm happy to say). Furry costuming and cosplay



Kevin Roche's excellent adventures in fursuiting: Torve the Trog" at Costume-Con 3 (photo: Linda Sweeting), Conrad T. Lizard at Conzilla 2006 (photo: Andy Trembly), and the Tiki Dalek at Westercon 64 (photo: Andy Trembly).

offer it's own unique set of challenges, and I'm really glad VC is featuring it this month.

Andy and I missed CC31 because we had 5 other events that weekend, including hosting hospitality for the Nebula Awards one day, a Eurovision Song Contest viewing another, and (the real deal-breaker), my MCing the PenWAG ArtWear 2013 runway show. At least we were able to send my Red Chaps of Mars to represent us in our absence! *[See a photo of these amazing chaps in the CC31 report later in this issue – Ed]*

Speaking of Costume-Con, I would be remiss to not give a shout out to our new Dreamcatcher award winners MariEllen “Mea” Cottman (for her fantasy armor with illuminated sword), and Justin “Lucky” McQueede and his three teammates (for their Darth Maul Cyborg). I wish I'd been at CC31 to see them in person.

They, together with Eric Stevens (“Snap E. Tiger”), who has an article in this issue on running a fursuit making business, are the latest members of the Silicon Web Costumers Guild. Welcome, Lucky, Mea and Snap E.!

By the way, have you renewed your membership lately? SiW elections are coming up in June, so be sure that you membership is current so that you can vote!

I hope to see you in July at Westercon, or perhaps at WorldCon in San Antonio I'm already 2/3 done with my masquerade entry – how did that happen?



From the Editor *Philip Gust**

For many costumers, the Furry fandom is a mystery. Why would these people walk around in animal suits when they could be wearing “real” costumes? Is it really OK to go to a Furry convention? And what's this business with the hugs?

“Furry fandom” is the term that describes those who are interested in *anthropomorphic* animal characters with human personalities and characteristics. It falls most closely as a sub-genre of fantasy. The fandom is interested in many aspects of anthropomorphic characters, from culture and literature to costuming.

Those in the fandom meet in local groups or “gatherings”, and participate in online communities. They also have conventions with panels, tutorials, and costuming parades and masquerades.

Surprisingly, only a small percentage of the fandom owns fursuits. The reason is simple: creating a fursuit requires advanced costuming skills that many don't have, and a commissioned fursuit can run thousands of dollars. Despite the price, costumers who accept commissions are in very high demand, with waiting lists of several years. The best of them are like rock stars within the fandom.

Fursuits are some of the most technically sophisticated – and expensive –

costumes, and their presentations are some of the most creative and appealing in any costuming community. I was very happy that so many in the fandom participated at Costume-Con 31 recently, and to see fursuits both in the sci-fi/fantasy masquerade and in the halls during the convention. As usual, the reception they received from costumers and “civilians” alike was overwhelmingly positive: people smile when Furrries are around. And that's where the hugs come in!

This issue of VC provides a gentle introduction to the Furry fandom and fursuit costuming. Some of the leading Furrries and fursuiters in the fandom have contributed.

Leading off this issue is news from Costume-Con 31 in May. SiW presented two Dreamcatcher awards in the sci-fi/ fantasy masquerade and we have photos of the recipients. SiW members also entered competitions at CC-31. There was a strong showing of costuming talent and we present photos of those who entered along with descriptions of their entries.

A big thanks to official CC-31 photographer Don Searle of [Fantascenes Photography](#) and videographer Eric Cannon of [Rare Recorded Videos](#) for covering all the events, and for the care they took with the photo and video shoots. A costumed performance is ephemeral without the skill and dedication of those who record it. Theirs is a work of art and a labor of love. The many attendees and participants in competitions who purchased their photo and video disks will treasure the memories they

captured for many years to come. Special thanks to Don for permission to use his photos in this issue.

Our coverage of Furry fandom begins with a review of the “fursuiter's bible,” *Critter Costuming: Making Mascots and Fabricating Fursuits* by Adam Riggs. A book dealer and member of the fandom, “Patch Packrat,” put out a call for reviews. He selected two to present, by fursuit builders Chris Czikra and Ray Stankewitz.

I present a “reporters notebook” of four websites that helped me learn about the fandom and furry costuming. There are many other resources available, but these four should get you well on your way.

Next is an article by Adam Riggs, who shares his years of building fursuits and teaching the craft of fursuit making. In his article, Adam covers the basics, and provides useful tips that will help novice builders get started.

Professional mascot and fursuit builder Eric Stevens tells us what it takes to run a successful costuming business. Whether you plan to work with a fursuit builder or go into it on your own, Eric's article offers valuable insight and advice.

Corey Strom, a co-founder of Further Confusion, one of the largest Furry conventions, tells



you “Everything You Wanted to Know About Furrries...” and answers the burning questions about Furry culture, fursuit costuming, and what a first-time attendee can expect to see at a Furry convention.

Next, fursuit builder Courtney Rayle shares the results of her experiment building a pair of digitigrade legs using the “pillow method.” She discusses the materials and the steps she followed to create the animal legs for a partial fursuit, and shows off the final results of her entry in the Costume-Con 31 sci-fi/fantasy masqueraded. Her techniques and the references she provides in the article will enable you to do your own experiments in this fascinating area of fursuit costuming.

Finally, “Patch Packrat” returns with a “Virtual Soapbox” piece on why “street fursuiting” is the most fun fursuit experience. Many fursuiters attend public events to entertain both children and adults, and “Patch” tells why he enjoys this form of hall costuming outside a convention.

Before closing, I'd like to mark the passing of stop-motion legend and special effects wizard Ray Harryhausen. An item in the “Short Subject” section covers his career and his impact on sci-fi movies. The pantheon of fantastic creatures that he brought to life over his long career, such as the Cyclops (left), also had a profound effect on young people who took an interest in animation and special effects,

including me, and on members of the Furry fandom who were eager to bring creatures like those to life in another medium. I was lucky enough to talk with Ray on several occasions, and to tell him how much his work meant to me. He will be greatly missed.

Here is a quick preview of what is upcoming in VC. The August 2013 issue turns back the clock to the Georgian and Regency periods, from George I in 1714 to the death of George IV in 1830. Historical movies and popular romantic literature are set in this period, so it is fitting to feature the costumes of the dashing heroes, dark villains, and elegant ladies who inhabit this world.

It's “Hats Off!” in the November 2013 issue as we celebrate the many forms of hats, masks, and headgear. From historical to fantasy and sci-fi, this issue will explore things that costumers put on their heads and the unique construction techniques that are used to make them.

I'm pleased to announce that the February 2014 issue will delve into the iconic costuming for one of the most popular sci-fi/fantasy series ever: *Dr. Who!* With the upcoming Los Angeles *Gallifrey* conference in February 2014, what better way to kick off the new year? Cheers!

See the Upcoming Issues page of the SiW website for details. Now is a great time to start writing for VC, and share what you know and love with your fellow costumers.

Two Silicon Web Costumers' Guild *Dreamcatcher* Awards Given at Costume-Con 31

The Silicon Web Costumers Guild presented two of its coveted *Dreamcatcher* awards at the Costume-Con 31 Science Fiction/ Fantasy Masquerade. The award is presented for the innovative use of technology and/or creative problem solving in costume construction. This is the first time two *Dreamcatchers* have been awarded in a single masquerade.

The first award was presented to MariEllen "Mea" Cottman's entry in the Journeyman Division, "Capt. Steiner, A Knight of Pluto" from *Final Fantasy IX*. The costume featured an oversized sword with electronics that gave the blade a blue glow and EL wire throughout the costume.

The second award was presented to Justin "Lucky" McQueede and a team of three other builders for "Darth Maul Cyborg" from *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. The entry included heavily modified commercial digitigrade legs from [Area51](#).

A team of SiW judges in the audience made the selections, and the awards were presented at half-time by Carole Parker. In addition to a *Dreamcatcher*, each recipient also comes with a year's membership in SiW and the ICG.

Congratulations and welcome to MaryEllen Cottman, and to Justin Queede and his team, as SiW's newest members!



MariEllen Cottman -- "Capt. Steiner, A Knight of Pluto." Journeyman Division. Photo by Don Searle



Justin McQueede and team -- "Darth Maul Cyborg." Best in Novice Division. Photo by Don Searle.

Silicon Web Costumers' Guild Entries in Costume-Con 31 Competitions

A recap of Silicon Web Costumers' Guild members who entered competitions at Costume-Con 31.

There was an excellent turn-out by Silicon Web Costumers' Guild members at [Costume-Con 31](#), held this year in Denver Colorado from May 17-20. CC31 Chair Michael Bruno (Denver Costume & Cosplay Society President) did a wonderful job, assisted by an incredibly talented and vibrant Colorado costuming community.

In addition to attending the many panels and sessions, some SiW members also entered the competitions put on by the convention. The competitions this year were:

Editor's Note

The editor is grateful to Don Searle of Fantascenes Photography for his kind permission to use his images in VC. Don was the official photographer for Costume-Con 31, and covered all the competitions and events. He is a remarkable photographer and a joy to work with. A CD of his images from CC-31 is available for purchase by contacting him at fantascenes@donsearlephoto.com. Visit the [Fantascenes](#) website to see more of Don's work.

- Doll Costuming Content
- Single Pattern Contest
- Science Fiction/Fantasy Masquerade
- Future Fashion Portfolio
- Historical Masquerade

Doll Costuming Contest Friday - Sunday

The Doll Costuming Contest that ran throughout CC31 in one of two exhibition halls challenged costumers to create costumes on a small scale. Contestants could submit a human or alien doll, or a costumed creature. There were separate judging categories for purchased figures dressed by the entrant, modified figures and entrant-made figures.

In addition to formal judging, attendees could also vote on their favorite entry for a "Members' Choice" award. This year's



Leah Watts – "Bridezilla". Members Choice Award.

award went to **Leah Watts** for her creation, "Bridezilla."

Single Pattern Contest Friday Evening

The Single Pattern contest provides entrants with a small selection of commercial patterns to construct and put their own spin on the finished product.

This year's contest provided four patterns to play with: one for ladies, one for gentlemen, one unisex and an accessory. Two are mainstream pattern companies available at most fabric stores, two are generally online only. The most expensive pattern is \$20.

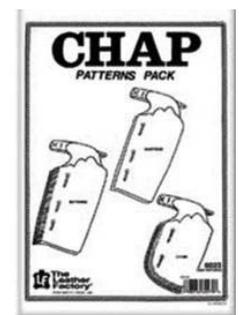


1930's Kitchenette
Pajamas

Lederhosen



Messenger Bag



Chaps



Kevin Roche – "Red Planet Mars" chaps. Judge's Choice Award.

Although he could not attend CC-31, **Kevin Roche** entered a pair of "Red Planet Mars" chaps in the contest, and received the Judges Choice Award.

Science Fiction / Fantasy Masquerade Saturday Evening

The Science Fiction/Fantasy Masquerade offered contestants a chance to let their imagination run wild on stage. It

recognizes creativity, workmanship and stage presentation. Coincidentally, there were 31 entries in the masquerade, exactly matching the number of the convention. Three of the entries were by SiW members.

Aurora Celeste and "Thing 2" entered as Rosie and Samwise Gamgee in a presentation entitled, "A Hobbit Family" in the Masters Division. The costumes by Aurora Celeste were inspired by *The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Rings*.



Aurora Celeste and "Thing 2" -- "A Hobbit Family". Masters Division.

Anne Davenport recreated "Tera Sinube," a Jedi Master from *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* for her Masters Division entry. The costume featured digitigrade legs of her own construction.



Anne Davenport – "Master Tera Sinube from Star Wars: The Clone Wars." Master Division.

Philip Gust entered as "Bilbo Baggins" in a costume that was made for him by **Kathe Gust**. The costume was based on the one worn by Ian Holm in the Birthday Party scene in the *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Rings* Movie. Kathe received Best in Masters Division Workmanship for her efforts.



Philip Gust -- "A Long Awaited Party." Created by Kathe Gust. Best Workmanship in Master Division.

Future Fashion Portfolio *Sunday Afternoon*

The Future Fashion event consist of two parts: The Future Fashion Folio and the Future Fashion Showcase. The design portion takes place prior to the conference, with designers submitting their designs by mail or email. Winning designs are published in the *Future Fashion Folio* approximately 6 months in advance.

Conference attendees can create designs from the *Future Fashion Folio* to present on the runway at the conference. Finished garments are evaluated on how faithfully they realize the original design.

Aurora Celeste created "Lady of the Lanterns," designed by Dawn McKechnie. The lanterns are lighted by electronic votive candles. Aurora was honored by the judges for Excellence and Attention to Detail.



Aurora Celeste -- "Lady of the Lanterns." Designed by Dawn McKechnie. Excellence and Attention to Detail.

"On the completely forested planet of La ForIt the pioneers have invented elegant solutions to the planets long nights and the dark forest floor hundreds of feet below the endless canopy. Among these are the fashions of the Lantern Ladies, whom wear glowing lanterns on their heads, illuminating their beautiful garb and making them seem like glowing angelic creatures as they go about their business. The elaborate headgear is not only fashion statement but is useful in leaving their hands free to go about their nightly tasks."



Dawn McKechnie -- "Lady of the Lanterns." Illustration and description from the *Future Fashion Folio*.

Aurora Celeste also created "L'il Pyro," modeled by "Thing 2," based on a design by Nora Mai.



Thing 2 -- "L'il Pyro." Made by Aurora Celeste. Designed by Nora Mai.

Historical Masquerade Sunday Evening

In the Historical Masquerade, costumes are evaluated both on construction and from the audience as presented. Entries can be categorized as Recreation, where precise historical techniques and faithful reproduction are valued, or Interpretation,

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where a period design or garment may just be a jumping-off point. There are three separate competitions: for historical documentation, workmanship, and presentation. Two of the entrants were SiW members.

Leah Watts recreated a period Shaker woman's costume in an entry entitled "Simple Gifts" in the Journeyman Division. The costume included period-accurate materials, and construction techniques. Leah was honored in documentation for Best Research, and in presentation for Most Authentic.



Leah Watts -- "Simple Gifts." Best Research for Documentation, Most Authentic in Presentation.

Kathe Gust recreated a English man's court costume c. 1780, on display in the Kensington Palace Museum in England. The costume used period-accurate materials and construction techniques, with extensive hand-died ribbon embroidery. The wig by **Philip Gust** was hand-made of human hair wefts. The costume featured actual 1780s

accessories including shoe buckles and a quizzing glass. Kathe was honored in documentation for Best Analysis of Source, and received Best in Show Workmanship. Philip received Best Presentation in the Masters Division for his portrayal of Revolutionary War Prime Minister Fredrick, Lord North's resignation.



Philip Gust -- "The Rehearsal, March 18, 1782." Costume by Kathe Gust, wig by Philip Gust. Best Analysis of Source for Documentation; Best in Show Workmanship; Best Presentation in the Masters Division.