

# Interview



## Everything You Wanted to Know About Furies... **Corey Strom**

*A co-founder of the "Further Confusion" Furry convention and an avid fursuiter talks with VC about Furry fandom, fursuit costuming, and Furry conventions.*

### **Furry Fandom**

#### **What is Furry Fandom?**

The Furry Fandom is a collection of fans, costumers, artists, writers and everyone in between who has an appreciation for the anthropomorphic arts. Anthropomorphism is the assignment of human attributes to otherwise nonhuman entities where animals and fantasy creatures are specific to the fandom.

Cartoon characters such as Bugs Bunny, or Wile E. Coyote fall into this category. Mascots provide an extra level of realism and a great opportunity for those into cosplay.

#### **How did it get started, and how has it changed since then?**

The idea of furry or anthropomorphism has been around since the cave man in early

art. A more obvious connection would be our Egyptian ancestors with icons like Anubis and Horus.

For Furry, the popular answer is that the fandom got its start from within the Science Fiction community in the form of anthropomorphic characters being portrayed in the writings and art.

Online forums, mucks, talkers, and other geeky ways to spread the word and communicate became increasingly more available and socially acceptable as the years moved on. Technology made it easier for people to organize, share ideas and meet in person, which ultimately led to the creation of the furry convention.

In the late 1980's the first furry convention was born out of an idea and a house party in Los Angeles, this became known as ConFurence. While that con no longer exists in its original form, its legacy has brought us a global community far greater than we could have expected with around fifty conventions worldwide today.

#### **What is the age and gender mix of people who participate?**

The average age of a furry fan is in their low to mid 20. The predominant gender is male, but this is rapidly changing. This is most likely

due to the fact that many social aspects of the fandom are rooted in the internet and computer technology.

#### **What kinds of events or gatherings do those in the fandom have together?**

Outside of conventions Furs are very active. Here in the San Francisco Bay Area we have a meet-up group where locals can organize their own events such as bowling, mini-golf, hiking, game nights, and movie outings.

Some regular gatherings have stood the test of time. A local chicken wing place near Santa Clara State University has been a meeting place for Furies every Thursday night going on fifteen years.



Fursuiters hit the links (lynx?) at a miniature golf outing.

## Do they attend public functions in costume as a group to promote the artform?

Many fursuiters do go out together in costume. For the most part it's for fun and self-promotion and more often than not evolves into free entertainment for onlookers. Getting photo souvenirs is very popular amongst furry costumers. At a recent event 30 of us rented limos on the Las Vegas strip for such a cause.

## Fursuit Costuming

[Adam Riggs' article, "Fursuit Fun" in this issue, covers construction basics – Ed]

## What is fursuit costuming? What are the similarities and differences to other kinds of costuming?

Fan costuming has been around longer than the fandom. It became "fursuiting" only when the first convention, ConFurence, began in the late 1980s. Furry costuming is an extension of anthropomorphic art and is a means for creative expression in both construction and performance.

Unlike most other types of costumes, full fursuits generally cover the entire body and are animal related. Thus faux fur is commonly used. Accessories are very popular. There are a good number of people who not only have a fursuit costume, but a costume for the costume. Many of the conventions in the furry fandom are themed each year. People enjoy theming their costumes to the events making a whole wardrobe for some of their characters.

## How many people in the fandom have their own fursuits? What portion build vs. buy?

The majority of fursuits are custom-made to emulate a character developed by the wearer. That said, about 15-20% (and growing) of the convention attendees have at least one fursuit. The ratio of purchase vs. create is much higher. Most people wearing fursuits at a convention purchase them from makers within the fandom.

Being a maker myself, I would guess about 5% of the suits being worn are actually worn by people who created them. This number is growing rapidly though with the advent of the internet, books, focus groups, and convention workshops.



Fursuit seen at a recent Further Confusion. Photo by [Beetlecat](#).

## Where do costumers learn basic and advanced fursuit construction?

I personally saw a costume that I liked and asked the person if they could help me design and construct my first costume. This person later turned out to be a good friend and roommate, and future author of *Critter Costuming*, Adam Riggs.

Most people I have known tend to learn from others in the community. Several of us, me included, have costume nights where others can come and learn while building their own creations. There is also an abundance of information on the net and in books such that Adam wrote. Conventions are a also great place to start. Many hold workshops on all aspects of fursuit construction.

## How much do fursuits cost to build, and where do costumers find their materials?

Costumes vary greatly in price from just a few hundred dollars to well over \$5,000. Depending on quality, detail, and reputation of the creator, average prices can range from \$1,500 to \$3,000 for a well-made full fursuit. Other options such as partial suits (head, tail and paws) are available from most makers at a greatly reduced price. More elaborate fursuits, such as "quad suits", can be had for around \$6000 - \$7000.

## How long on average does it take for a costumer to build his or her first fursuit?

Time to create a costume really depends on aptitude and previous experience. For people with pervious art experience, sculpting, sewing, or 3D rendering it will be easier to pick up as most of the concepts to learn will be material related. Folks starting from scratch can expect to spend a good amount of time building their first suit. What most new creators need to embrace is perseverance. It takes time, patience, and practice, but for those who keep it up the rewards is simply amazing.

## What are some trends in materials, construction techniques, and special effects for fursuits?

Most furry costumes are made from a few standard items. Faux fur, foam (similar to what you might find in a couch cushion but a bit more dense), and poly fill (the stuffing found in most plush toys) round out the majority of the standard materials. There are several methods of constructing the heads, the most popular being foam added atop a balaclava (a spandex hood). Other methods include fiberglass, metal frame, plastic sheet, heat-molded plastic (vacuform), and block foam (carved from a solid block).

Furry costumes generally start off as a concept. The wearer has an idea of what they would like their costume character to

look like. If they are not an artist, they will commonly commission an artist to render a 3D model sheet which most costume makers can use as a reference. Some makers are also 2D artists making the process one level simpler.

New materials, ideas and technology are being integrated into fursuits all the time. From onboard cameras, communication devices, and cooling systems to blinking eyes, wagging tails, twitching ears, and lighting; fursuits are becoming much more complex than ever before.



Corey Strom at a local weekly furry meet.

## *Furry Conventions*

### What are some of the main Furry conventions that costumers can attend, how large are they, and where are they located?

Further Confusion in San Jose, California is the world's second largest convention with an expected 2014

attendance of 3700. The largest furry convention is Anthrocon in Pittsburgh, PA with an attendance just over 5000.

There are around 50 furry conventions and meets around the world in which costumers are more than welcome to attend.

### **You co-founded Further Confusion. How did it get started, and what was/is your role in the convention?**

It was more about being in the right place at the right time. While I was walking the halls of my first Furry Con (Confurence 9 in 1998), I happened upon a few guys discussing the possibility of starting a new convention in the San Francisco Bay Area. Confurence was moving their date, which left a gap for an event in January. I offered my assistance as being a project coordinator for IBM at the time. They thanked me and moved on, not really knowing who I was.

As luck would have it, a month later I became roommates with someone in the know who re-introduced me to the team. At that point, nine of us hashed out plans for the convention. With a little luck and a generous donation of funds we opened our doors in January of 1999.

My first role was co-author of the policies and procedures for our convention, as well as the procedures for our first dealers' room. I went on to become Chairman in 2003, and was elected to the board in 2005, where I now hold the Media and Public Relations Director role for Anthropomorphic Arts and Education Inc.,

the parent company of Further Confusion. This year, I am Vice Chairman for the convention.

### **How do you go about promoting attendance to first-timers?**

Comic stores and anime and science fiction conventions are frequented by our marketing staff in the form of room parties, workshops, fan tables and flyer distributions. Further Confusion has taken the first big leap in the Furry fandom and now promotes itself publicly via street banners and promotional programs with local vendors in the time around our convention. We also work with other Furry conventions in an effort to spread the word amongst ourselves.

### **Is a convention like Further Confusion family friendly?**

Most of the major Furry conventions, including Further Confusion, are family



Costume parades give fursuiters a chance to strut their stuff.

friendly. Further Confusion has many events which support an all ages audience, our live animal events and Critterlympics (Costume Games) are amongst them.

### **How is a Furry convention organized and what kinds of events take place that costumers might enjoy participating in?**

Many furry conventions are organized in a track format with tighter focus areas such as costuming, writing, music, and art. At a Furry convention much of the focus is on anthropomorphic costumes or “Fursuits”.

Within our costuming track there is no shortage of interactive activities. We have the obligatory masquerade, a highly polished talent show, costume parade, and an amazing fursuit dance competition. In addition we have several workshops and talks where one can learn anything from the basics to some of the most advanced costuming and performance techniques. We regularly have professionals in the industry who coach on costuming as a business or even as a charity.

### **Are there costume parades or masquerades? If so, what are they like and how are they judged?**

We have both a judged masquerade and variety show. The masquerade is geared



A young fan shows off at Further Confusion 2007. Source: [WikiNews](#).

towards the costume itself where the variety show, known as “FC Unleashed,” is billed for the performance aspect of costuming. The masquerade is judged loosely on ICG rules with the intent to fully embrace them this coming year. The variety show is also judged, but from a performance aspect with guest judges and audience choice awards and a cash prize.

There is a “Fursuit Parade” held each year which meanders its way around the convention site. The parade is the one and only opportunity for costume wearers to receive a collectable tag unique to the event and year for their costumes!

**If a costumer doesn't have a fursuit, is it still OK to attend a Furry convention? What percentage of attendees have their own and wear them there?**

Absolutely! Furry cons are about Furry as a whole, not just the costumes. There is so much more to see and enjoy at a convention. There is an art show with fan created art, where some pieces have sold in upwards of \$10,000. There is also a Dealers Room where vendors sell anthropomorphic related wares. Dance lessons, drawing workshops, gaming rooms, voice acting, performance, and species workshops add to the over 100 individual events that make up a weekend at Further Confusion.

It's not unheard of for people to bring several fursuits to show off during the course of the long weekend. I regularly bring three of mine and in most cases an entire set of repair tools. The percentage of people who actually wear what they make is pretty low. I'd say around 5% of the costumes you see at a furry convention are worn by their makers. The rest are loaned out by friends or purchased from fandom costume makers.

**Can a costumer learn enough at a convention to build a fursuit? Do dealers sell material there?**

It is possible to get enough information to start a fursuit while at a convention. If one takes good notes and asks plenty of questions, they can be well on their way to



building a suit. Some conventions, including Further Confusion, have presented a series of workshops where an attendee can leave the convention with a creation of their own. Most items are simple given the time, but the resources and sharing nature of the community make it much easier for the everyday person to become a master at furry costuming.

Due to the bulky nature of the materials most convention dealers do not stock raw materials. Most raw materials are available online or from your local sewing/fabric store.

*Corey "Chairo" Strom is the co-founder and current Vice-Chairman of Further Confusion. He holds the director of Media and Public relations role on the board of directors for Anthropomorphic Arts and Education. Corey is also an award winning costume designer and performer. In his spare time (if there were such a thing) he enjoys traveling, and working with LED, laser, and flame effect performance technologies.*

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"Helix is a personal suit and my 4th raccoon. He was a project in body patterning. There are no side seams in this suit and all the swoops and curves have a flow from one to the other. The black leg pattern matches the body stripe which blends with the shoulder, the forearm, and so on. His hair has changed to a more uniform pattern since the picture was taken. The most difficult part actually was the tail and keeping the white stripes in line." (not shown)

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