

Feature



Disney Gender-Bending

Milo Martinez and Bethany Padron



An award-winning pair of costumers talk about Disney cosplay and why they love to gender-bend the characters.

Mashups, Historically accurate, Zombie, Pin-Up, Showgirl, Gender-swapped, Hipster, Steampunk, Star-Wars, Red-Carpet, are all variations on the theme of Disney costumes. A quick search on the web will bring up endless amounts of fan art and variations to pour over. Disney characters and their wear have permeated three generations of costumers. These variations on the princesses, villains and heroes work because the color and shapes are so iconic.

Bethany: I like the pantheon of Disney Villains because they have the best songs, so for my first foray into variant Disney costumes I chose the villain from an oft overlooked film from the tail-end of the Disney Renaissance; *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*.

“Claude Frollo’s” costume consists of a black judge’s robe with red and violet trim, striped shoulder wings, white collar and a distinctive triangular hat. I started with a piece

by DeviantArtist BlastedGoose that had created female versions of many male Disney Villains.

I tweaked a bit of the design to fit a more period and regional style of the original story, including adding the pleats from a French surcote and changed the judge’s collar for a demi-ruff. I built a non-period corset to



Disney Villainettes – [Frollo](#) by BlastedGoose



[Male!Esmeralda 2](#) by Maby Chan

emphasize my shape. I chose fabrics and trim that had a pattern to the weave or a damask to add another layer of historical value to the costume as well as lots of crosses.

After wearing the costume a few times, I asked my partner-in-costume if he’d be willing to make up an “Esmerelda” costume. Since “Frollo” is arguably the most overtly

sexual of the Disney Villains it's interesting to mess with the sexual politics of Disney canon when in character.

Milo: "Esmeralda" was a little easier to accomplish, her defining clothing features are the teal waist cincher, purple coined skirt and the pink headscarf. I settled on something close to this design by artist Maby-chan.

I opted for a less structured pair of pants and a bigger waist piece, which was created in panels similar to a corset with boning and a



Frollo and Esmeralda at Costume Con 30,



Esmeralda waist cincher detail.

lace up back. The first iteration of this had the gold piping painted on. It currently has proper gold trim sewn over all the bones and edges along with some painted flower detail at all the inside corners. The coined skirt is simply a large square that has pre-made coin trim sewn to the edge.

Milo: Fast forward a year and I decided to make myself a "Jasmine" costume for halloween. There was oodles of artwork to start with but I was particularly taken with a historical version that I had seen. This render features "Jasmine" in embroidered pants and a small jacket alone with Persian jewelry and shoes. Though a historical view was my source, I concentrated on an over-the-top princess interpretation.

My big adjustment for the gender-bend was to change the jacket to a vest. The vest was freehand patterned and constructed from a very flashy sequined fabric. The pants were made using a simple wrap pants pattern found here, from Laupre [Wrap Pants!](#) I made them long enough to fold over a channel at the ankle so I could gather them. I added some

trim and painted embellishment to the hem and waist areas using designs similar to what is done for henna tattoos. The Tikka headpiece and Indian bridal jewelry were procured off ebay, where you can find a huge selection at very reasonable prices. The juti, ankle bells, and belt were purchased from [India Bazaar](#).

Milo as Jasmine 2012.





Jasmine vest and pants detail.



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Bethany: When Milo asked for a companion costume to his “Jasmine,” I immediately grafted to “Jafar” for the same reasons I chose “Frollo.” However, I found him to be too one-dimensional as a character and keeping the identifying aspects of his costume while making it feminine just wasn’t to my liking. I finally decided on “Aladdin” and after a quick trip around Tumblr, I found a design that I liked. This time, I chose fabrics that had more texture and open weave to lend the “street rat” vibe. I distressed the entire



-16-

outfit with numerous trips through the wash, some tea-staining and plains dust.

Milo: Disney Cosplay is LOADS of fun, I cannot recommend it more. The characters and their clothing are iconic and recognizable and gender-bending adds new depths. It’s a great exercise in boiling down a character to the essentials, taking that and giving it a new form. The reception on both of these pairs was overwhelmingly positive.

I can attest that there is no greater feeling than being recognized as a Disney Princess by a 5 year old who is excited to meet you. If you’re interested in gender-bending, or any other genre costuming, your favorite Disney character, go for it! There are plenty of places to find artwork. Look up “gender-bend (character name)” in an image search, DeviantArt, Tumblr or Facebook Groups to get your ball rolling.

Milo Martinez has been an avid maker his entire life and a competitive costumer for 8 years. He enjoys partnering with other costumers for masquerades, but his real love is armor making. He holds a B.S. in Comparative Media Studies and a Minor in Theater Arts from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Bethany Padron has fostered a love of costuming in theatre and is the Costume Studio Manager for the University of South Dakota. Her research interests include costume crafts, non-traditional materials, and appendages. She holds a BA in Technical Theater from Creighton University and a MFA in Costuming Technology from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

Jasmine and Aladdin at Costume Con 32. (left)