

Feature



“Miss Toffelees” the Steampunk Voodoo Queen **Samantha Witt**

Photo: [Tim Boothby](#).

An aspiring cosplayer creates a terrifying brew as she mixes together elements of Louisiana-style voodoo and classic steampunk.

When I first started in costuming, I fell in love in Steampunk. It was so different from the normal costuming I did – anime and video game characters – that I couldn't resist making my own. “Miss Toffelees” came from a wild thought after I watched *The Princess and the Frog*. I was dazzled by “[Dr. Facilier](#)” and thought that I wanted a steampunk version of that: not the character himself, but the same essence!!!!

I schemed and planned and finally came up with my vision. I knew that I wanted some color in it besides the normal

Author's Note

Voodoo practices involve animal parts, so I thought it only fitting to use real animal parts in my costume. All the parts were either shed naturally by the animal or humanely obtained by the seller.



“Miss Toffelees” wearing top hat, frock coat, skirt, and apron.
Photo: [Adam Kant](#).

black, bronze, gold, grey, brown, etc., and I refused to put gears on it because, for this character, it would have looked out of place and tacked on. □

There are many types of voodoo practices from many different regions, but I chose to base this character on the Louisiana style of voodoo. More modern and able to fit in better in the towns, my character is the type who lives in the backwood swamps and no one dares to enter her domain. When she comes to town, the residents race into their homes and lock the doors, businesses shut up shop and flash their closed signs. She is not welcome, but is too intimidating to be told to leave. She has her familiars, both human and animal, that prowl the towns and local bayous and serve as both her guardians and victim finders.

She can make you rich or give you the love of another, but double cross her or fail to uphold your end of the bargain, and the consequences would be dire. I needed to make her gruff and grungy looking, with chewed up and ill fitting clothing, hair dreaded from neglect, and a smile so fiendish that even a devil would be jealous. □

I will describe each element of the costume I came up with, from the very top to the bottom, list the materials I used, and discuss construction details. □

Horned Top Hat

Materials:

- Base: Black Wool Felt Top Hat - Size Medium sold by [Patterns of Time](#). (below) □
- Quills: 2 Impala horns and 13 African porcupine quills from [Atlantic Coral Enterprise](#).
- Material: Fabric flowers made with gold and black scrap fabric leftover from my corset. □
- Button: 1 Acrylic 25x18 Black skull Lolita Skeleton Cameo button from [Cameo Jewelry Supply](#) □



Top hat with button, horns and porcupine quills.

As a voodoo queen, “Miss Toffelees” needed a crown. Since this was steampunk themed, a top hat was in order, but what to put on it? Voodoo is often times paired with the Devil so I figured that horns would be a good fit, but they looked very plain by themselves. I thought of porcupine quills (see picture #6) after watching a TV program that talked about lion fish. The spike points on their fins were amazing, and I knew they would look great on my hat. I put 13 quills on my hat because 13 is supposedly a scary number.

For the very center of the hat, I found an adorable skeleton cameo while I was looking for another type of buttons for a different part of the project. Surrounding the cameo are just the tip of the quills that I snipped off and stuck in the band. I noticed a lot of headaddresses place a skull of some type right in the center, so I copied them. Instead of something like a bird or rodent skull, however, I thought the cameo would look just a bit more elegant.

Finally, the base of the horns looked plain, so to make it look a little nicer, I wrapped remnants of the fabric that I used for my under-bust clincher into little roses. I finished the hat with a single peacock feather I found in my yard. □

Wig

Materials:

- Dionysus-24" Silvery Grey Straight long Cosplay wig from [Epic Cosplay Wigs](#).
- BB Tropical Roots Locking Gel from [Sally Beauty Supply](#).



Photo: [Tim Boothby](#).

I used this wig for a different cosplay long ago, and for a long time it was thrown into my closet and forgotten. When I started this outfit, I thought long and hard about the hair style and finally settled on dreadlocks. Why? Because they just went so well with the outfit. It went with the unkempt look I was going for. But how to dread this wig without completely setting it on fire?

Thankfully there's YouTube! I found a simple tutorial by "Nibbles Official" called, [How To Make A Dreadlock Wig](#). I didn't have to make the wig from scratch but I still used the method of dreading the hair with a washcloth and flat iron. It was very tedious and very slow but eventually it was all dreaded and it looked great!

To help keep the dreads nice I found a product called, BB Tropical Roots Locking Gel from [Sally Beauty Supply](#), and slathered it all over.

Makeup

Materials:

- Makeup colors: Black and white cream makeup from Spirit Halloween Store. □
- For the lines: Mabelline eye liner. □
- To set the makeup: Baby powder and black eye shadow. □□



I wear one of two makeup designs with this costume: a “glamorous” makeup and a “spooky” makeup. After all, she is a voodoo queen, so she really does need to have both to reflect her mysterious personality. I wear the “glamorous” makeup most often, but when I wore this costume to the [Tree City](#)

[Comic-Con](#) in October 2014, I decided to use the “spooky” makeup because that month was Halloween, and I thought it was more fitting.

To create the “spooky” makeup, I searched the Web for skull designs and chose one that I liked.

To apply it, I clean my face with alcohol, then drew out the eyes, cheeks and teeth using a Mabelline eye liner. Then I filled it in with the creme make up that I purchased at the Spirit Halloween Store. I set the makeup with baby powder for the white part and black eye shadow for the black parts.

I'm wearing my “glamorous” makeup in the photo on the previous page.

Frock Coat with Tails

Materials:

- Pattern: Reconstructing History, “1790s-1810s Frock Coat” from [Patterns of Time](#). (above)
- Material: Black polyester blended suiting fabric. □
- Lining: Turquoise Intricate Scrolled Brocade. □
- Buttons: 2 Silver skull 1/2 inch □
5 Black and white ceramic style 1/4 inch. □□



Oh this coat! How it drove me crazy! I've never used an “old-timey” pattern before, and many of the terms and instructions were very confusing, but I triumphed and this coat came into being. I've always wanted a frock coat with tails, so why would the voodoo queen not want one as well?

I know that the coat looks baggy on me, but there is a reason. It goes with the persona of the character: the villain whom no one would sell to. It only makes sense that many of the clothing

items were found second hand or taken from victims who could not hold up their end of the deal. It was easy to make it a little bigger on me since the pattern was meant for a man, but I had to be careful to not make it so big that it swallowed me up and I looked like I was wearing a tent.

While constructing this piece my mind went back to colors, and I fell in love with this turquoise brocade at my local JoAnn Fabrics. Against the black, it was beautiful pop of color to catch the eye, and it tied in really well with the whole outfit. □

I initially made the buttons holes with my sewing machine but they looked terrible after I cut the holes. To make them more clean-looking, I took embroidery thread and whip stitched all around the holes. I used shanked buttons to make it easier to button and unbutton, and sewed them on by hand.



Top

Materials:

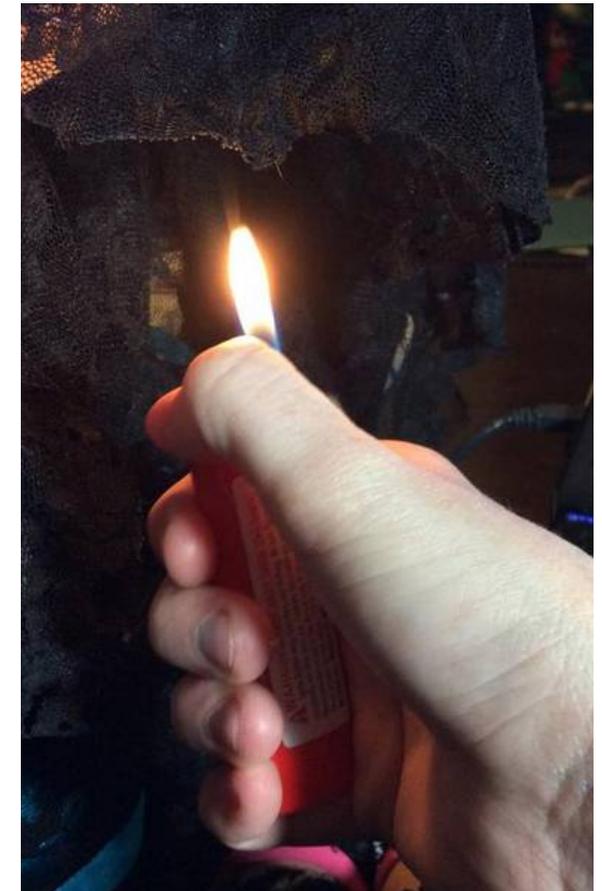
- Pattern: [Simplicity #1819](#) Misses Steampunk Costume.
- Under fabric: turquoise.
- Over fabric: stretch lace.
- Sleeves: stretch lace with tricot bandages □
- Decoration: blue mini pendants for jewelry making. □□

This was pretty simple to make. I picked the blue to compliment all the other blues that I had going on. The pattern did not originally come with the sleeves. The reason I added them was because it just looked bland to me. I did not like the way it felt without the sleeves, and it was a fun idea for a style. I drew out a sleeve silhouette on paper first, and then transferred it onto the left-over lace I had.

The tricot strips were tricky. I had to size each according to where it was going to sit on my arm.

The jewels were added as an afterthought. I was browsing Walmart and found them in the jewelry section. Since I had blue in my outfit already, I envisioned them making the shirt look just a tiny bit more luxurious. □

To make the top a little more ragged-looking, I picked at the edges of the tricot strips and the bottom of the shirt with my fingers then took a lighter to it burning the edges (below).



Distressing top by burning the edges.

With frock coat removed, showing coat lining, top and corset. Photo: [Adam Kant](#).

Corset

Materials:

- Pattern: [Simplicity #1819](#) Misses Steampunk Costume.
- Fabric: Filigree Black/Gold cotton from fabric.com□
- Lining: Gold satin found at a thrift store.
- Boning: plastic bridal boning.
- Front buttons: 7 Glass Aurora Borealis Intaglio Scarab 18x13. 1 Scorpio zodiac cameo, both from [Cameo Jewelry Supply](#).
- Grommets: 1/4 gold color.
- Tie-black and gold rope. □□



Simplicity #1819 used for top, corset and bustled skirt.

I found a beautiful filigree patterned black/gold fabric while browsing Fabric.com, and I just needed it! I thought that the gold on top of the black was a good way to break up all the brown, black and blue colors that were going on. The pattern originally called for the corset to be installed with a zipper, but I replaced that with gold grommets and a rope tie. I picked out the blue buttons because I thought that they complimented the gold. The Scorpio button is just because I'm a Scorpio and it was a nice personal touch. □

Bustled Skirt

Materials:

- Pattern- [Simplicity #1819](#) Misses Steampunk Costume
- Fabric: Brown Polyblend □
- Bustle: Brown Polyblend
- Upper lining: Light blue sateen
- Lower lining: Black sateen□
- Apron and cascades: Turquoise Intricate Scrolled Brocade.
- Ribbon: Turquoise Grosgrain. □

I wrestled with what color to make my skirt. I didn't want to make it black or shockingly blue because it was eye-watering tacky (at least to me). I looked up many color combinations, and finally settled on a nice brown with the blue. It went well with the black, gold and blue already on the costume.

With the color out of the way, I had to decide what style I wanted. I kicked around the idea of ball gown skirts and mermaid skirts, but found that the skirt that went with the pattern I was using was perfect. It was big. and bustly. and made my brain tingle with the thoughts of the Voodoo Queen wearing something so poofy as to hide the instruments of her craft – though she'd have to be careful not to sit on her things! □

The apron and cascades on the skirt went through several changes. I originally started with black and gold fabric, but after the initial application, it just didn't flow right. I had left-over brocade fabric that I had lined my jacket with, and it was just right against the brown. □□



Bustled skirt for Simplicity #1819 steampunk costume.

Spats

Materials:

- Fabric: Turquoise Intricate Scrolled Brocade. □
- Lining: White muslin □
- Pattern: Printable pattern from the [“Thank You for Not Being Perkey”](#) website.
- Buttons- 1/4 mismatched buttons I found at a yard sale. □□



I've never made spats before, and while hunting down a pattern by McCall's, I found that my local stores were completely out of it! Using my “Google-fu” I found a very simple print out pattern. I re-sized it to fit around my shoes and a tiny bit longer.

The instructions were really convoluted and confusing, so I had to do it my own way to get it put together. I just winging it, and sewed it to the best of my abilities. I put the

right sides together and sewed around, leaving a space to turn, then slip-stitched the opening. I added the lace because, honestly, it just looked pretty and added a little bit of fanciness to the outfit.

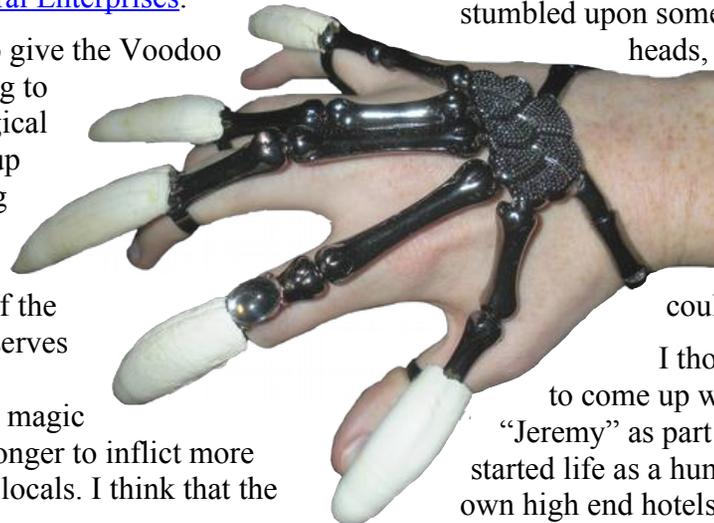
Now this is where I was overthinking things. As I was making the spats, I imaged that each button had a different meaning or power. In my imagination, where this character lives, they acted as totems for her magic. The clock button manipulates time and life force. The white buttons are like the eyes of a blind person so they steal peoples sight. The blue flower button is of swamp magic, vines and water to torture her victims and protect herself. □

⚡keleton Hand Jewelry

Materials:

- Jewelry: Purchased from [Dhgate.com](#).
- Decoration: 5 adult gator teeth from [Atlantic Coral Enterprises](#).

I wanted to give the Voodoo Queen something to identify her magical side, so I came up with her wearing this jewelry piece, adorned with five teeth of the bayou god that serves as her master. It concentrates her magic and makes it stronger to inflict more suffering on the locals. I think that the



teeth add a nice touch, and give the illusion of a clawed hand.

I am not talented enough yet to make the hand piece from scratch, so I had to find one online that would do the trick. The teeth were applied using Beacon 3-in-1 glue on each of the fingers.

Cane with Alligator Head

Materials:

- Cane: Wood carved panther head cane from the [World Market](#) □.
- Decorations: Taxidermied alligator head from [Atlantic Coral Enterprises](#). □ a rabbit spine that I found outside, and a magpie feather found on my doorstep. □

Most of the best villains seem to have canes, and it went with the theme of the costume. I found the cane at the World Market, but it lacked personality. As I was looking for the perfect horns for my hat I stumbled upon some taxidermy alligator heads, and immediately wanted

one for my cane. I named him “Jeremy” and tied him onto the cane. I even made him a little top hat out of felt so he could be posh as well. □

I thought that it would be fun to come up with a back-story for “Jeremy” as part of the cosplay. He started life as a human being who wanted to own high end hotels but he was failure at

everything. He went to “Miss Toffelees” and made a fairly simple deal to be successful and rich. “Miss Toffelees” was in a good mood that day so the only thing she asked for was a free meal from one of his high end hotel restaurants. He agreed, but as with most people like Jeremy, success went to his head and he forgot all about his deal.

When “Miss Toffelees” came for her meal, she was instantly sent away. When she asked to speak with Jeremy, he looked her right in the eyes and dismissed her because he didn't want it revealed that he had went to the ugly swamp witch who, in reality, was responsible for his success. □

“Miss Toffelees” left, but that night, when Jeremy was in his bed, he found himself awakened by a thumping sound. He opened his eyes to see the witch lady standing over him and he yelled! But the sound that came out of his mouth was nothing more then a squeak! She had turned him onto a tiny alligator and told him that he was to be her servant for the rest of time. When he protested, “Miss Toffelees” cut his head off and trapped his soul in the severed head. She is the only one who can hear his thoughts and, to her annoyance, they include a wide assortment of swear words.

The other decorations for my cane are a rabbit spine and a magpie feather. The rabbit spine I found when I was a kid walking on train tracks. It was so fascinating, I took it home, much to my mother's disgust. I've had it for over 10 years, and finally found a use for it. I found

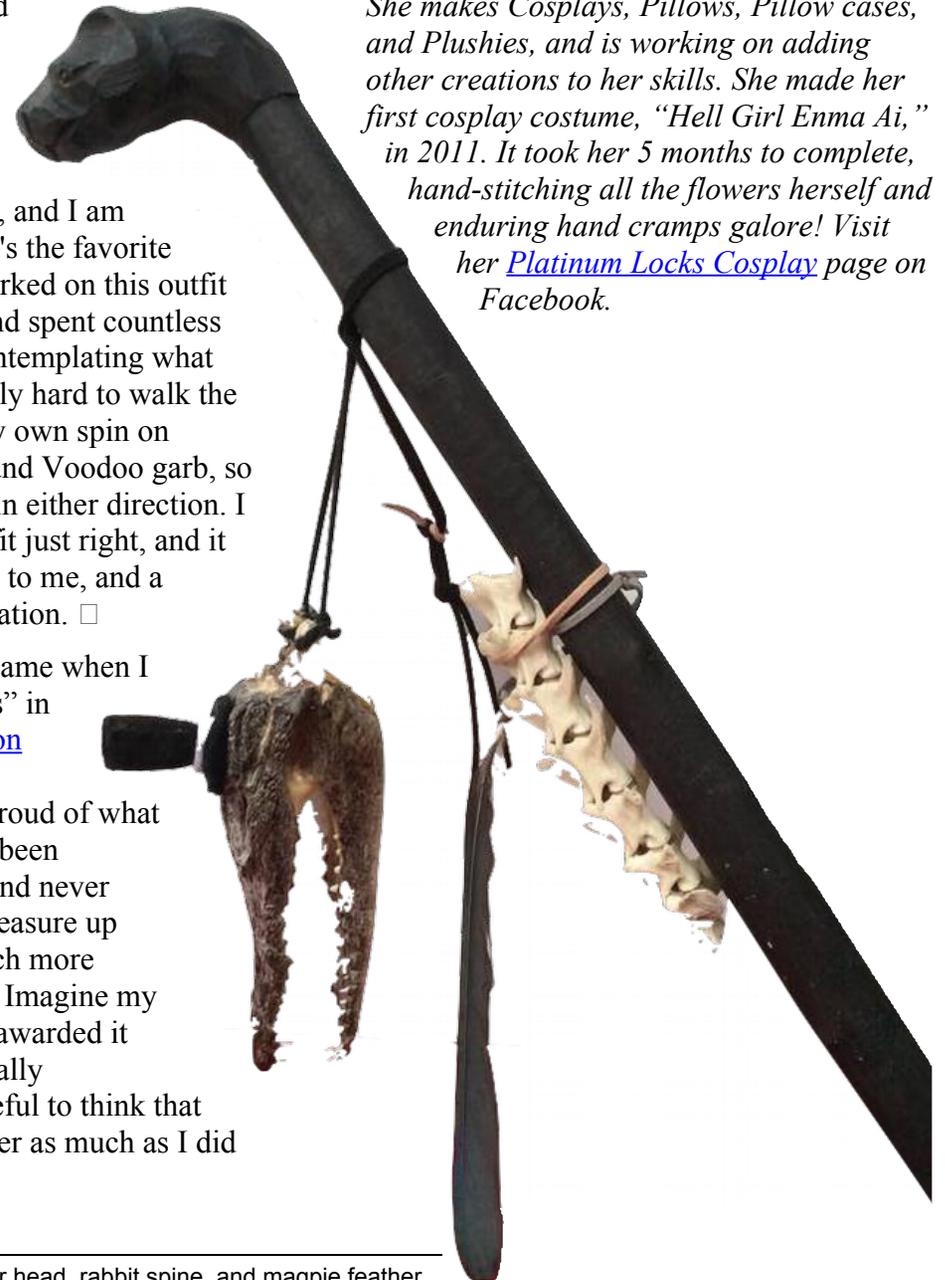
the feather on my doorstep one day, and thought it would make a nice accessory along with the spine and the head.

Final Thoughts

This is by far the most thought-out costume I've ever made, and I am so proud of it. In fact, it's the favorite thing in my closet. I worked on this outfit for over five months, and spent countless hours designing and contemplating what would work. I tried really hard to walk the line between putting my own spin on traditional Steampunk and Voodoo garb, so it didn't become cliché in either direction. I think that I got this outfit just right, and it will forever be a classic to me, and a statement to my imagination. □

My biggest thrill came when I entered “Miss Toffelees” in the [Tree City Comic-Con](#) masquerade in October 2014. Although I was proud of what I had done, I've always been skeptical of my skills, and never thought that it would measure up against the work of much more experienced costumers. Imagine my shock when the judges awarded it Best in Show! I was totally overwhelmed, and grateful to think that others enjoyed seeing her as much as I did creating her.

Samantha Witt is an aspiring seamstress who is working to become a Pro. She makes Cosplays, Pillows, Pillow cases, and Plushies, and is working on adding other creations to her skills. She made her first cosplay costume, “Hell Girl Enma Ai,” in 2011. It took her 5 months to complete, hand-stitching all the flowers herself and enduring hand cramps galore! Visit her [Platinum Locks Cosplay](#) page on Facebook.



Cane decorated with alligator head, rabbit spine, and magpie feather.