Yipe!

The Costume Fanzine of Record

Volume 3 Issue 10

Don't Hate the Cosplayer, Hate the Game

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Issue Ten

Don't Hate the Cosplayer, Hate the Game

FEATURED ARTICLES

MONTHLY COLUMNS

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The Costume Fanzine of Record

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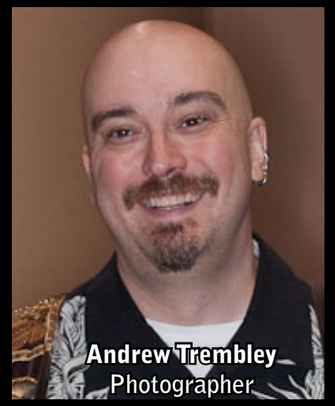

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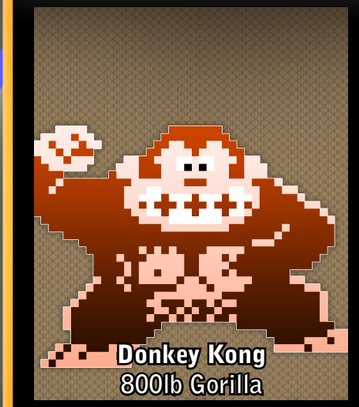

Donkey Kong
800lb Gorilla

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Letter from the Editor

Halloween always seems to be our Waterloo.

It's pretty much the anniversary of Yipe!, the most costume-themed time of year, and the time when work seems to pile highest on everyone's desks.

It also happens to be the beginning of what we will refer to as "Video Game Season," and this year is no slouch.

Gears of War 3, Resistance 3, Rage, Batman: Arkham City, Battlefield 3, Modern Warfare 3, Uncharted 3, Elder Scrolls 5: Skyrim, Assassin's Creed: Revelations... Will you see costumes from all these games at your next con? Possibly. More likely they'll be the direct cause of missed deadlines at the Yipe! central office.

And, whaddayaknow; they are!

So now that we've confessed the shameful addiction that runs through our veins like a sweet kiss from Lady H, let's celebrate the inspiration said dependancy lends to our creative outlets.

Quick, before the spiders come back! THEY"RE ALL OVER ME!!!

Send all complaints to:
Jason@yipezine.com

Adventures with an 8-bit Outfitter

Courtney Rayle (aka Killpurakat) with Kevin Roche

Kevin: I haven't done much in the way of videogaming for years (truth: I remember the Magnavox Odyssey, and Pong, and played lots of Atari 2600 games at my godparents' house), nor have I costumed from them. I did have friends who worked for Atari and other game companies in the 80s (including the one who ported Tetris to an arcade console), they include some of the great fan costumers of the time: Karen and Kelly Turner, Rusty and Diane Dawe, etc. The Masquerade at Renovation (the 69th World Science Fiction Convention), featured some superlative video-game inspired costumes, notably the Katamari Damacy entry by Sionna Neidengard and MariEllen Cottman, and Princess Pac-Man by Courtney Rayle.

While exploring possible topics for this article, I resorted to the venerable and time-honored research technique of whinging on LiveJournal, and Courtney responded with a lively collection of videogame costume tales. You can find her online in numerous fora, including LiveJournal, as the online persona killpurakat.

Let's cue the 8-bit orchestra and start with a bit of moti-

vation – why do videogame costumes?

Courtney: Video games tend to allow for more leeway with costumes than most. Recent video games have tons of details that can be manipulated and added to, but the old 8-bit stuff is fun to play with, and with nostalgia, people appreciate seeing their favorite blasts-from-the-past. I like using video games as inspiration for original costumes because there's so much to pick from and so many concepts to play with (seriously, where did the old text adventurers keep their inventories? Did Mario kiss the Princess right after eating a fire flower? What the heck is Q-Bert?). And there is nothing like the feeling you get from pulling a totally weird concept from out of nowhere and having people recognize it even though it's your original creation.

Kevin: One of the videogame characters I've seen done well a number of times is Link from the Legend of Zelda series. Bryan Little (whose work has appeared in the pages of Yipe before) has appeared as the Twilight Realm version, Wolf Link. Courtney's rendition of Link seems to bring out the cheerful side of people…

Courtney: In 2009, I dressed as Link on the Friday before Halloween (for school). I had an impressive shield and sword and was fairly recognizable from a distance. That day, I decided to go get a bite to eat from across the street (at the Commons), half because I was hungry, and half so that people could see the costume and I wouldn't have spent the day trapped in the grad student office.

I got many high-fives, shout-outs, and even a few "OMG! I'm taking a pic of that! POSE NOW!!!" from random passersby. After I got my food and was walking back, an elderly couple (about 70-75 years old) happened to stop to cross the street with me. They glanced at me, smiled in that doting-grandparent way, and calmly crossed with me and turned to go down the street.

Quite suddenly, I heard someone humming the main Legend of Zelda theme. I turned around and, as loud as they could, both senior citizens were half-humming, half-wordless-singing the theme for my costume. I shouted an "Awesome! Thanks!" and they increased in volume, causing quite a few people to turn and stare at them, then at me in recognition.

Totally cracked me up. Long live gamers, young and old! ;)

K: But wait, there's more...

I wore the same costume in March 2010 at a small con I staffed at, then went to my fave comic book store on the way home. The guys there knew me, know about my costuming, and we had a brief laugh while I made my purchases. I got the comics, hopped back in my car, and backed up to get out of the cul-de-sac type parking.

A group of three late teenagers was crossing the street as I swung my car around. Two glanced up, noted that I was there in a car and had slowed down and thus seen them, and continued crossing to the shops. The third, however, glanced at me, then did a double take, squinting. He yelped, jumped two feet in the air, and started waving like he was trying to swat drunk bats out of the air.

My windows were rolled up, so I couldn't hear what he was saying, but I waved and he got the goofiest grin on his face as he maniacally waved back and kept yelling at his friends, who looked caught between thinking it was cool to see someone dressed as Link driving around, and trying to convince people they weren't with the

crazed spaz.

Kevin: Courtney popped up on my costuming radar when I was MC'ing the Fantasy and Science Fiction Masquerade at Costume-Con 28, a bit later in 2010…

Courtney: When I was convinced I would be going to Costume Con 28, I decided to enter my first masquerade. I had several costumes I could have used, but I had heard stories that this group were the pros, the ones who enjoyed costuming no matter what, so I figured if I wanted to try some original stuff (as opposed to the anime/video game specific characters I wore at other conventions), then there was where it would be accepted.

At another con (Animeland Wasabi 2010), I had met up with a friend of mine; we were both fans of the webcomic Ctrl-Alt-Del. We had briefly chatted about possibly doing a panel that would be one big skit about a religious group for gamers based on the "Winter-een-mas" joke from the C-A-D comics. I thought this would be a good basis for an original

costume, so I started to work on it on and off. My original plan was to have it completed way in advance and to spend time actually beading all the emblems onto my tabard.

School interfered, however; I barely finished the costume in time (quite literally 10 minutes before I left for CC28) and ended up using iron-on paper to swipe images off the internet for the tabard. I bugged LiveJournal friends for ideas about which games/gaming symbols to include, spent forever altering images so I could print them, and went through all the stuff my family had saved (yes, we had broken game stuff packed away) for things I could add. I was worried about going overboard, but it seems like that's much harder to do with an original costume. I actually learned quite a bit from this experience because I had never combined two patterns to make one garment (the dress is a combo of a Simplicity pattern and a McCall's).

In the end, it has turned into one of my favorite costumes, and people seem to enjoy it. The ton of references means there's usually something for everyone. I once got chased down at a convention by someone dressed as Link: he grabbed me by the shoulder, made me stop, then proceeded to search for a LoZ symbol; when he found it, he gave me a thumbs up, huge smile, and then hugged me as he ran off.

Kevin: And now, finally, let's talk about Princess Pac-Man. I had the privilege of seeing this up close while directing the Renovation Masquerade, and helping perpetrate a running gag with the MCs about her continued dating adventures. We did, wonder, however, how you came up with the idea in the first place!

Courtney: There's a picture on DeviantArt of Gabe (from the Penny Arcade webcomic) as a princess, drawn by Dan Shive (creator of the "El Goonish Shive" webcomic). It's called Princess Gabe, with his trademarked Pac-Man shirt turned into a ballgown. I thought it was hilarious, and wanted to imitate the dress, as it was really neat looking, but after an initial reaction of

"I'd like to have that," I kind of forgot about it.

One day in Jo-Ann Fabrics, during one of their 50% off Red Tag sales, I found crushed yellow velvet material for $2/yard and bought all 20 yards of it. I had no clue what I'd use it for, but I knew I wanted it. My first idea was to try to create Belle's dress from Disney's Beauty and the Beast, but it looked like a harder project than I would be able to handle. It sat on my fabric shelf for over a year.

I was going through my favorites folder on DeviantArt, looking for a specific joke drawing, when I saw the Princess Gabe image and decided that it might work with the fabric. I played on and off with the concept, then stupidly made a promise to a friend (who was a fan of Penny Arcade) that I would show up at the next convention I went to as Princess Gabe. He went nuts and lit a fire under me, so I rushed and managed to just finish it in time. I even added a Fruit F***er backpack (another character from Penny Arcade).

With that dress, I tried to make the bottom poof out (as it does in the picture) by sewing a long orange "snake" filled with Fiber-Fill to the bottom of the dress. I wore it like that for the convention, but it got incredibly dirty, was very bulky, and just generally didn't work. Lesson learned there.

In addition, nobody at the convention really recognized me; Aside from my friend, only two people got the Fruit F***er reference and realized who I was supposed to be. Everyone thought I was honoring Pac-Man, or that a new Pac-Man game was coming out and I had imitated something from rumors/screencaps of it.

When I got home, I threw the dress out because the snake bottom thing had gotten so dirty and part of the dress had ripped (in an I-can't-fix-it way). I had enough of the material left to make it again, and this time I went about it more carefully. I decided to bring it to WorldCon 2011 at the last moment because my other costume was unfinished. Since nobody before had gotten the Princess Gabe reference, I decided to just call it Princess Pac-Man, make a Ghost backpack, and go all out for humor.

I also brought a Kirby doll I had made for a LARP game (other, long story) and decided to throw in as many game references as would fit with the funny angle I was trying for.

Luckily for me, Worldcon audiences like humor and are versed enough in video games to get the overall picture.

Kevin: It helped a lot that you sold the story so well on stage, and sending the followup engagement announcement to the MCs was inspired!

Courtney, thanks for sharing you adventures with me and the readers of Yipe. Good luck with your future adventures in costume and video games (and thank you for saving me from having nothing to submit this month!).

Sheriff Don't Like It

by España Sheriff

Videogames are an area in which I have little or no expertise either as a costumer or as a consumer. Although I do often say I'm not a gamer, that isn't one hundred percent true. I have certainly played card and board games a lot and am not entirely ignorant of the world of consoles and PC games. But, when it comes to the video games I do like to play, it seems most of them are either ones were the action takes place from your character's viewpoint, such as Portal or Doom (yes, I'm dating myself) or strategy games like Civilization or Sim City, neither of which are really about the threads. I suppose there are some old 90s ones (Has anyone but me ever heard of Sabrewulf? I loved that game.) but 8-bit is not really where it's at fashion-wise, and I'm not even going to pretend that the MUDs and MUSHES of the mid-nineties have anything to offer the conversation, although their descendants, MMPORGs like World of Warcraft (which fascinate and terrify me by equal amounts) seem particularly interesting from a costuming perspective, but as regular readers may already have guessed, I don't really play well with others.

Games nowadays have graphics that were unimaginable until fairly recently, and the freedom to defy the laws of physics within the world of the game makes for both entertaining gameplay and gorgeous design possibilities. Characters with ten foot long tresses that serve as weapons, guns and blades larger than the person carrying them, fantastically ornate armor that would crush a human wearing it in normal gravity, and, of course, the rather fanciful anatomical *ahem* exaggerations on which I could, but for once shan't, write a whole diatribe.

Having been to comic book and anime conventions I was aware of the popularity of gaming costuming within those two communities. After asking someone what the deal was with all those six foot long foam swords and armoured paramilitary types and realizing that costumes from games are almost as prevalent as those from anime and comics, and twice as impractical under real-world physics. Yet, somehow, people manage to pull them off with ingenuity, hairspray and duct tape. Making something that has no place in the real world live and breathe (and doing it well) is one of the things that is so very neat about the subgenre.

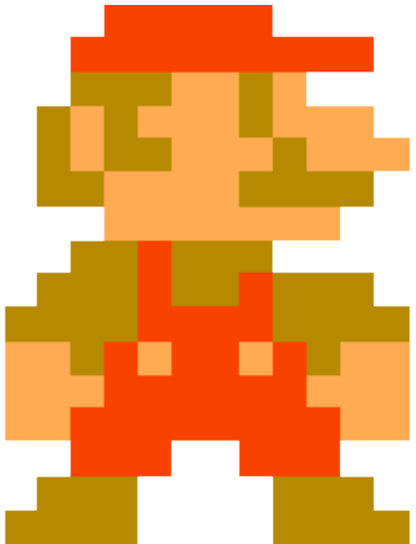
But what impresses me most is costumers who take it to the next step and recreate parts of the game that are not even obviously animal, vegetable, or mineral. Minecraft creepers, katamari, pac-men and so on. The ingenuity involved in costuming things that aren't quite anthropomorphic, or even clothing, makes me smile every time, and I have become increasingly annoyed with myself at my vast ignorance of the subgenres these wonderful creations come from. I have piles of both anime and games waiting for me to dive in, but there is always something else distracting me, so I fall ever further behind.

So, thank goodness for the age of Google and Wikipedia, then-- which allows one to at least have a passing knowledge of whole areas of fandom previously only accessible through the tedious process of acquiring direct experience, taking away valuable time allotted to watching cat videos on YouTube (OMG Maru! Ahem). Not to say I approve of dilettantism, because that would be thoroughly unfannish of me, but it is nice to have some idea what is going on some of the time. Which, come to think of it, is the motto by which I live my life, really. Particularly within fandom.

Stitched in Bits

by Mette Hedin

I may be a passionate costumer, but, truth be told, I only spend maybe 2 months a year building costumes, whereas video games are something that occupy me year round. Long before I dressed up in any real sense of the word, I



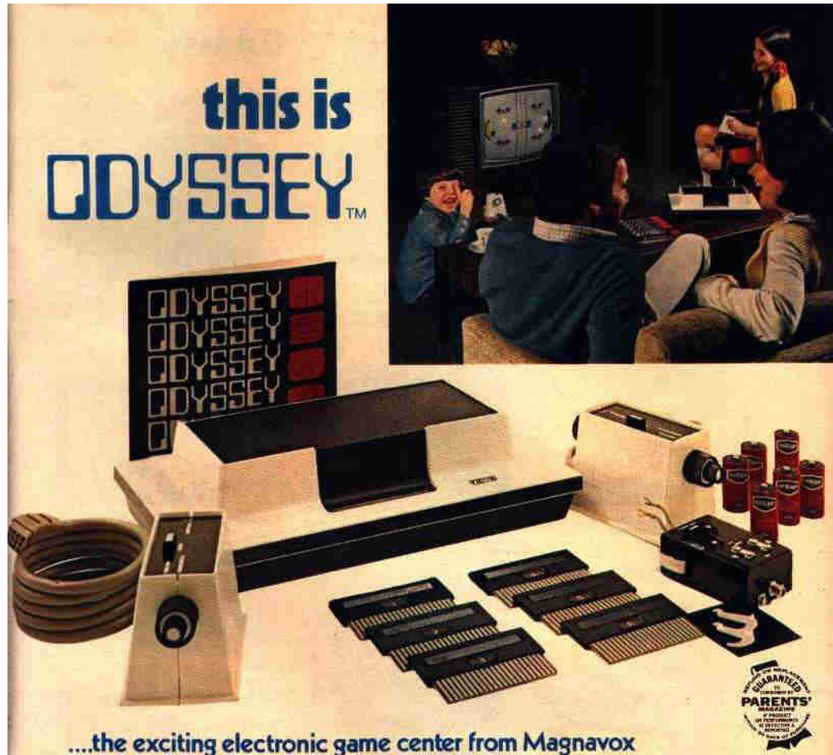
spent countless hours staring at pixels moving across a screen while frantically pressing buttons. To this day, I still overcompensate for not having access to video games at an early age. One of the greater tragedies of late was when my beloved PS3 fell victim to the dreaded YLOD (Yellow Light of Death) and kicked the bucket along with all my game saves from the last 3+ years and the first disk in my Bottom DVD box set.

In our 2 person household, I estimate that we have about 6 different handheld game systems and 11 different video game consoles. That's not even taking into account the gaming capabilities of my various supposedly more "productive" electronic devices (and trust me when I say that those capabilities are well utilized). In the interest of full disclosure, I will even say it has crossed my mind several times during the writing of these first two paragraphs that this task is definitely keeping me from a lot of potential gaming. My eye keeps sneaking over to the wireless controller next to me that could at any time enable me to simulate the shooting of virtual, mutated, Soviet zombies.

I think we can safely say that I love video games.

As a not too unusual combination of gamer and costumer, I have made a fair amount of costumes inspired by video games but surprisingly few when you think of the potential of the source material. I have played a large number of games over the years, and each game normally comes with a whole cast of characters which, combined, provide an abundance of inspiration for costumes. Furthermore, video game characters tend to have a very distinct style and can be gratifying recreation costumes for that reason. But perhaps it is more interesting to look at the historical development of video game costumes over the years and, to do that, we have to look at the restrictions that have caused the stylistic choices. To narrow the scope a bit, I am going to focus solely on the more popular video game consoles as those enabled home use from an early time period, before computers were in every home and establish a longer and more gradual timeline.

While there have been video games in some form or another since 1947, they mostly resided in research labs or universities. Their general unavailability to the public for several decades is the first sign of what is ultimately THE most influential factor in video game character appearance: Hardware. Before the 1970's, it was mostly academic and research institutions that would both have access to something as expensive as a computer AND think of making games for it. As for arcade games, it wasn't until 1971 that the first mass-produced coin-operated arcade game was released. A total of 1,500 units were manufactured. The game was generally considered unsuccessful, but it did lead the developers to create a second arcade game: Pong. This game became a massive success, selling 19,000 units and spawning a fair amount of clones. It led to the first ever home video game console: the Magnavox Odyssey, which was the first of what is now referred to as the first generation con-



....the exciting electronic game center from Magnavox

Odyssey, **model TL 200,** is an electronic game center that easily attaches to *any brand TV, 18" to 25"* (diagonal*), *black and white or color.*

The Odyssey Master Control Unit transmits electronic games over your television. To play electronic tennis, simply insert a printed circuit Game Card into the Master Control Unit to activate two player lights and a ball.

There are two Player Control Units. Each player can maneuver his player light vertically and horizontally across the court. An action button on the Player Control serves the ball. A special "English" control puts a twisting curve on the ball to "fake out" your opponent.

Odyssey features 12 games and a Master Control Unit that allows you to play all the optional games too (shown on page 47). In addition to a Master Control Unit, Odyssey also includes two Player Controls, six printed circuit Game Cards, six "C" cell batteries, Game Overlays and everything you need to play the twelve Odyssey games: Table Tennis, Tennis, Football, Hockey, Ski, Submarine, Haunted House, Analogic, Cat and Mouse, Roulette, States, and Simon Says. Odyssey is truly a total play and learning experience, for all ages — young or old! Odyssey — from Magnavox.

All specifications herein subject to change without notice. ** 19" and 26" diagonal in Canada*

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Early artist renditions of Pac-Man gave costumers a 3-dimensional figure to work with, but the results were less than inspiring.

soles. The Odyssey had a sort of cartridge, but all it really did was to connect circuitry inside the console to enable different games, most of them pong-like. All the games were in black and white, but the console came with translucent plastic sheets that you could tape to the screen for a more colorful experience. The graphics were two dimensional and very blocky in appearance, so the majority of game "characters" were white rectangles.

The Odyssey sold a whopping 330,000 units and spawned a number of competing game systems, most of them simple pong clones which led to the "Video Game Crash of 1977". The sheer number of pong consoles flooding the market led to the collapse of nearly all of the companies involved. It wasn't until the following year when the arcade game Space Invaders truly evolved the video game experience and spawned the second generation of consoles. When the console demand picked up again, only two survivors were still standing, Magnavox and Atari. The second generation consoles had what we think of as proper swappable games with the game logic encased in the plastic cartridge. By now the consoles featured color games and the simple white rectangles had been replaced with more expressive "sprites". For many of the early console generations a game character was almost invariably made up of one or more "sprites", which is a two-dimensional image that can move over the still or scrolling background and be animated by flipping between several still images, reminiscent of a flip book animation. This makes it appear as if the character is walking or swinging a sword for example. Sprite complexity was a good indication of the graphic capabilities of a system, measured in number of pixels and colors per sprite.

The Atari 2600, a very popular system in the second generation, technically only had 2 larger sprites, 8 pixels wide and 3 smaller sprites that were 1 pixel wide. The system was relatively unique compared to later consoles in that it had such a small amount of memory that it drew the picture line by line. For that reason

The Atari 2600's horsepower allowed for the creation of more complicated graphics and what would become the first enduring video game characters.

there does not seem to have been any real height limitations to the sprites. Each sprite could only have one color, but with some creative programming and by changing colors and sprite positions at the right time while the line was being drawn, skilled programmers were able to trick the system into displaying a larger number of sprites and more than one color per sprite. The system had a palette of 8-128 colors, depending on the display system, and the screen resolution was equivalent to 160 x 192 pixels. Since the vertical resolution was greater than the horizontal resolution, the games would appear a bit stretched in the horizontal plane. The characters produced with this technology would appear advanced in the late 70's, but by today's standards they are very blocky and hardly very expressive. The color limitations also meant that there was very little room for creativity in character and costume design, if we can even speak about the latter on the 2600.

The greater graphic capabilities spawned a much greater game variety and many new genres were invented. By 1982 approximately 8 million console units had been sold and the industry was generating

revenue in the billions. However, yet again the market was flooded with too many different competing consoles, and too many updates to existing consoles. On top of that, many games were released too quickly, severely lacking in quality leading to the second great collapse of the industry, the "Video Game Crash of 1983". The poster child and partial culprit of the crash is the legendarily awful "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial", a movie tie-in game for the Atari 2600, which was rushed out for christmas. The game features bland graphics as well as tedious, confusing and pointless gameplay. It also had very little to do with the movie and was sure to disappoint. Out of the 5 million copies ordered by Atari, only 1.5 million actually sold and many of those were returned by frustrated consumers. There is a great legend that a landfill in New Mexico contains the crushed remnants of the excess E.T. cartridges, and while it has never actually been confirmed, the myth lives on as one of the greatest failures in the video game industry.

So by 1985, the video game industry in the U.S. completely imploded and revenue went into free-fall, from the 1982 peak of $3 billion to an abysmal $100 million in 1985.

Despite early attempts to imagine Pac-Man as a more complicated design, the 2-dimensional original endures even in today's costumes.

Retail stores declared home video games a temporary fad and cleared out most of their remaining stock. Most of the companies withdrew from the industry including Magnavox or went under completely . Meanwhile in Japan, Nintendo who had mainly been making arcade games launched their first console Famicom, short for "Family Computer" in 1983. Initially plagued with some technical issues, it went on sweep the Japanese market in 1984, and Nintendo set their sights on the now obliterated North American market. Since the word "console" had essentially become a four-letter word to american retailers, Nintendo named the console "Nintendo Entertainment System" (NES) for it's U.S. launch in late 1985. It became the most popular third generation console by far, dominating the market and nearly single-handedly powering the console comeback in North America. The system is still one of the more successful of all time with nearly 62 million units sold and a staggering 20 year production run. This accidental and very sudden geographical shift in video game production meant that the basic artistic aesthetics of the video game characters would forever be changed as the majority of games were now being developed in Japan by Japanese artists and developers. It is no coincidence that many of the anime costumers also show an interest in video game costuming, as many of the game genres share a very close aesthetic with anime.

At this point it makes sense to pause for a moment and look

Super Mario marked a leap not only in the technology of video games, but also the fusion of American and Japanese popular cultures, cementing the anime-manga-video game triad that endures to this day.

at what a third generation console such as the NES was actually capable of. The NES was pretty average for a third generation console in the limitations it placed on the graphics capabilities. Most of the consoles at this point were 8-bit systems. The term 8-bit refers to the processor and how many bits it can process in a single instruction, which in turn affects processor speed. That indirectly also affects how much memory the processor can handle and says a lot about the capabilities and limitations of the graphics, and the graphics is what limits the game characters and their appearance. The NES allowed up to 64 sprites to appear on the screen simultaneously but typically more than one sprite would be used for each game character, as the sprite size was limited to 8 x 8 or 8 x 16 pixels. The first NES Super Mario character for example, was 12 x 16 pixels, a dimension which had to be sufficient for all the individual action poses, since the characters were animated by switching between several sprites. Sprites were also used to animate parts of the background, such as a flickering fire, a flag moving in the wind or spinning gears. Another reason to combine several sprites was that each sprite could only contain 3 different colors. For the system as a whole, there were only 56 possible colors to choose between, and no more than 25 different colors could be used at once.

When game developers and artists have to work within a very strict set of limitations, it is interesting to see how it affects the character design. Many games opted for simple shapes like round blobs and even when more humanoid shapes were used, they generally tended to result in a fairly short and broad characters. The aforementioned Mario, who was designed by Shigeru Miyamoto, is almost

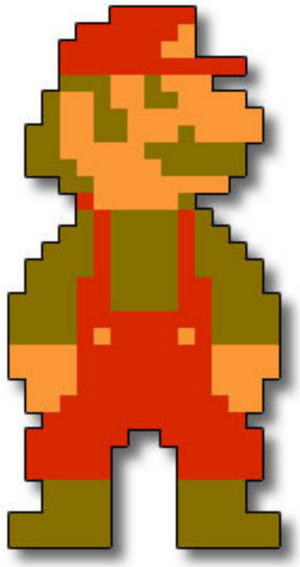
entirely designed with hardware limitations in mind. His trademark mustache is present in order to separate the nose from the rest of the face. The overalls over a shirt in a contrasting color made it possible to show him swinging his arms as he was running and the hat was added to avoid complications of hair. He furthermore has the typical squatness of a video game character that has to fit into a finite number of pixels. Remove all those elements from the character, and there isn't much left of what is distinctly Mario. In retrospect, it seems likely that the supposed plumbing career of "Jumpman", as he was originally named, was conceived of only after the fact, when they were faced with the chubby little fellow in his overalls and big mustache. After all, in the last 24 years I have never once seen him fix a leaking pipe or install a water heater. Instead he seems to be on a permanent sabbatical leave from his plumbing day job as he is called upon to rescue the same princess over and over as she is consistently kidnapped by the same villain every time. I would also argue that a plumber is probably the least likely person to call if a member of the royal family has been abducted by a fire breathing demon-turtle-hybrid with an interest in studded bracelets. If the villain, Bowser, sounds more interesting as a character, that is likely because he was much larger than Mario, at 32 x 32 pixels.

Despite their size limitations, the NES characters were still a huge leap forward compared to most second generation game characters, where often a box shape for a head was deemed sufficient. Mario clearly had more advanced facial features capable of displaying at least some simple emotions. Mario's 12 x 16 pixels was also a relatively common size for the average video game character on the NES for practical reasons. If he had been larger, there would be more pixels to paint and more room for artistic expression but it would also have grown the proportion

The simple design of NES characters has made their costumes easy to both replicate and adapt to many situations. Sadly, this dog never made it past the lava level.

of the screen taken up by the character during the game. the NES had a higher resolution than the Atari 2600 with it's 256 x 224 visible pixels but it was still relatively primitive. Taking up too much screen real-estate with the character would make game play suffer, since you wouldn't be able to move very far around the screen. In his modest size, you would only be able to stack 14 Marios on top of each other before the screen was filled vertically. Once Mario eats the super mushroom he grows to twice his height, filling up an area 20 x 32 pixels. That means it only takes 7 of him to fill the vertical space of the screen and we also have to make room for the ground at the bottom of the screen and the score keeping area at the top. Bowser by comparison, can afford to be much larger, as he only appears rarely during the game and being the bad-guy benefits in game design terms from towering over Mario.

Not only were the artists limited to a relatively strict character size to fit the game play but to top it off there were the color limitations. The Mario we have been examining was made up of only 3 colors, (brown, red and orange) which meant that colors were cleverly reused. Mario's skin tone is reused in his overall buttons, and his shirt color is also the color of his boots and hair. The limited color palette and the necessity to make the character stand out visually from the background meant that most video game characters used rather unique color combinations. This is especially apparent



with the villains, which rarely appear in the archetypal dark color schemes of their film and comic book brethren. A character dressed mostly in black just isn't going to stand out very well, so it wasn't unusual to fight bad guys in such unusual colors as brown, pink or purple. The limited palette also meant that subtle color nuance changes just weren't realistically possible.

As with all Japanese creations, there is always room to reinterpret video game icons as highly marketable consumer products.

All of that was about to change as the 4th generation systems came on the scene and dutifully adhered to a computer science principle named Moore's Law. It is a term named after Gordon E. Moore who described a trend in a paper in 1965 that has pretty much held true ever since then and will continue to do so for another number of years. Moore's Law states that the number of transistors you can cost-efficiently place in integrated circuits basically doubles every two years which gives an exponential improvement of hardware capabilities. This massive performance increase affects processing speed, memory capacity and even the screen resolution. This means that the natural lifecycle of the average console tends to be only a few years before it starts being hopelessly outdated. As components get both more powerful and also drop in cost, the capabilities of the current range of consoles at any point dwarves the previous version but is always a big step behind the new console still in development. As the hardware improves, so does the graphics capabilities.

Sega had been a competitor to Nintendo in the third generation console war with the Sega Master System. Sega attempted to gain market share by releasing its 4th generation console, the Sega Mega Drive

in 1988 in Japan and the following year in North America renamed as the Sega Genesis. The Genesis became the first really successful 16-bit system in North America. Having twice as many bits as the 8-bit systems enabled significant improvements of graphics capabilities. The Genesis had a color palette of 512 colors, and could show up to183 of them at once although the screen resolution and number of sprites was only slightly higher than the NES. Nintendo had been reluctant to abandon their successful but aging 8-bit system, but soon saw their market share crumble and were forced to join the 4th generation party 2 years later with the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES). The SNES did benefit from the delay as it had a much more impressive set of stats with a palette of 32,768 colors and a resolution as high as 512 x 478 pixels. Sprites could now be as big as 64 x 64 pixels each with up to 16 colors, and up to 128 sprites could be on screen at once. The explanation for such dramatic improvements is complex but has a basis in Moore's law. Basically, one of the major factors is that 8 bits can store a value between 0 and 255 and 16 bits can store a value between 0 and 65,535. Doubling the number of bits drastically increases the number of possible values which are in turn used for such things as the number of colors and pixels in a sprite.

Initially designed to show-off the Mega Drive's muscle, Sonic quickly became Sega's mascot and longest-running franchise.

Thanks to the console wars, advancing graphics led to more detailed characters which could easily be studied and re-created in real-world costumes.

Think of how 1 single number can express values from 0 to 9, whereas merely doubling the number of numbers to 2 will multiply the range of values by 11 since it can now express a range of 0-99. The doubling of the number of bits follows the same principle. With the SNES and its much upgraded capabilities, Mario stayed about the same size pixel-wise, but his color scheme improved drastically and with up to 16 colors in the same sprite started to appear in more subtly shaded colors with less need for creative reuse of hues between parts of his costume. The character still retained much of the 8-bit cheerful feel with the high contrast and primary colors necessitated in the 8-bit world but that aspect had now become more of a stylistic choice. Video games had by the limitations of their consoles been very colorful and high contrast and even though those limitations were evaporating many games still emulated the same cartoony, colorful and cheerful feel of their ancestors. Eventually artists would take advantage of the more subtle levels of color expression of the improved hardware, but to this day a large portion of games available are still made in hysterically happy color schemes.

Evolution of an icon

There were 3 major players in the 5th generation of consoles, all 3 featuring 16.7 million colors and resolutions up to 640 x 480 pixels. Sega released the Sega Saturn in 1995 and Sony entered the console war with the PlayStation the same year. Both consoles used 32 bit processors, although the Saturn had 2 of them, ultimately making it more complex to develop games for, costing the Saturn in games and ultimately market share. Nintendo launched their bid at the 5th generation market with the Nintendo 64 the following year with a 64 bit processor. Once 32 and 64 bit processors had become cost efficient enough, it was effectively the end of increasing the size for processors as anything above 64 would give very little gain, and 32 and 64 bit processors are in fact what is still used to this day in both consoles and computers. From here on, processor speed would be a much more interesting comparison, as the higher the processor speed, the faster the processor could process the data for the graphics. All 3 systems did bring massive improvements in graphics capabilities, and the 5th generation brought

Sony's first foray into video games forever changed the gaming landscape with the introduction of true 3D graphics and full-motion animation. Boosted by their CD drives, the Final Fantasy games on the PSX inspired a generation to spike their hair and turn used ironing boards into longswords.

with it the major breakthrough of 3D graphics. Rendering the graphics in 3D enabled such things as complex rotation and lighting effects that brought a whole new level of realism. In describing the graphics, the term "sprite" is now an increasingly obsolete term, being replaced with terms such as "polygons per second" used to describe the speed in rendering the 3D objects. For this generation the polygons per second were measured in the hundreds of thousands. With the 3D graphics came the ability to rotate the camera around your character, requiring far more detail in character and costume design than ever before. 2D graphics had enabled the artists to only show the good sides of the characters, but now the player had more of a choice in what to look at. One could put it more subtly by saying that this was the first time that video game characters had to start thinking about wearing underwear. In addition to and partly because of the improved graphics, the Saturn and PlayStation also used CD's instead of cartridges, a natural development as the CD offered more storage space than a cartridge and the improved graphics demanded more data being stored. Nintendo had however stuck with the more old fashioned cartridge format. The storage limitation forced developers into graphics compromises and many developers ended up abandoning Nintendo for this reason, causing Nintendo to lose a lot of market share. The Nintendo 64 would in fact be the last console to use cartridges and Nintendo lost their market leader position to Sony who ended up selling a record 100 million units of their debut console. This shift in leadership also signaled a shift in content as the family friendly cheerful Nintendo titles far undersold the more mature offerings for the PlayStation.

For the 6th generation console brawl, 4 fighters entered the arena but only 3 would leave. In this generation, the polygons per second were measured in the millions enabling increasingly beautiful and/or realistic graphics. The Sega Dreamcast was launched first in 1998 and was the first console to enable internet connectivity through an optional modem and thereby online gaming. Ultimately it suffered from being the least powerful 6th generation console by being first to market, and the Dreamcast would be Sega's exit from the console market. Sony's PlayStation 2 was launched in 2000 and Microsoft debuted with the XBox in 2001. Both consoles utilized DVD's for another

Possibly the most accurate Final Fantasy costume ever constructed.

HALO: Combat Evolved forever changed how we look at multiplayer gaming and masculinely iridescent space armor.

boost in data storage. Nintendo also launched their Gamecube in 2001 but settled for a CD format. Out of all the 6th generation consoles, the Nintendo Gamecube was the one console to stay the most firmly in the happy technicolor cartoon-land of the early video games, partly due to its massive legacy in existing game properties. Successful characters would keep re-appearing in every console generation, only slightly upgraded in appearance and the Nintendo brand was increasingly seen as aimed at a younger audience. The XBox and PlayStation 2 in contrast used the improved graphic capabilities to create more and more realistic and gritty worlds and their game catalogs would increasingly appeal to a more mature audience. The idea that video games were just for kids was finally shattered by the younger consoles successfully broadening the audience and building on the foundation of the previous generation, the PlayStation 2 walked away from the 6th generation fight the undisputed winner with another record sale of 150 million units to date. It is in fact the only console of the 6th generation that is still being manufactured and sold.

If the 6th generation brought more realism, the 7th generation which is also the current age of consoles, has taken it even further. The 3 consoles currently on the market are the Nintendo Wii, the Sony PlayStation 3 and the Microsoft XBox 360. The PlayStation 3 and XBox 360 have a lot in common: they both have a processor speed of 3.2 GHz and both offer a high definition gaming experience with support for resolutions up to 1080p, which is effectively 1920 x 1080 pixels. The crisp beautiful worlds brought to life with the advent of 3D graphics have to a large degree been replaced with dilapidated dystopian scenes such as the nuclear wasteland or grimy muddy battlefields. The graphics have become so powerful that adding imper-

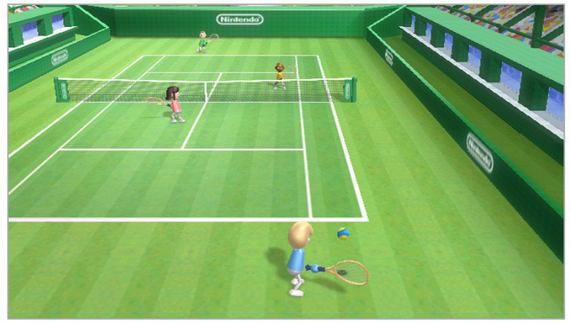
While the cartoony games of the 80s and 90s worked for kids, the first decade of the 21st century saw those generations grow up and gear themselves for war.

The Gears of War franchise gave rise to an explosion of testosterone rarely seen before in the video game scene.

fections, dirt and decay to the virtual worlds of the various games has come into fashion. As a side effect of this it now looks like many game characters have never seen a washing machine in their life nor would they know what to do with it. It has gone so far that I have started avoiding some game genres and titles mainly because they are just too damn depressing. Other titles still have used the increased power to approach something very close to cinematic quality, as every character movement in the game has been motion captured from real actors, some even all the way down to facial movements.

The Nintendo Wii went a different way altogether. Deciding early on that they weren't going to win the monster truck race the other two consoles were engaging in. They look more like they are merrily puttering around in a colorful smart car. The Wii does not have high definition graphics and its processing power is barely a 5th of that of the other two. As a result the graphics are decidedly more primitive and previous generation, but it is also firmly entrenched in the cartoony look that Nintendo has settled into. The Wii's truly innovative aspect is one that has changed gaming in a completely different way. Instead of a traditional game controller Nintendo went with the "Wii Remote" that more resembled a remote control. The console senses the position and motion of the remote through a sensor bar attached to the television and people of all ages were suddenly running around in front of their televisions swinging pretend swords and throwing virtual bowling balls (and sometimes their controllers) towards the television. The Wii has perhaps surprisingly turned us all into virtual cosplayers, as we literal act out the moves of our

Despite the many qualms parents may have with the violent nature of modern video games, you have to admit they inspire some great blood-drenched armor.



Nintendo's Wii took on the daunting task of making players feel they had physically entered the world of the game. As many a designer of steering wheel, tennis racket, and lightsaber attachments will tell you, the gambit paid off.

digital characters. You would think that the technologically inferior Wii would lose out in this battle, but it is the clear leader of the 7th generation consoles world wide, leaving the two Goliaths scrambling to catch up, and both Microsoft and Sony have since released their own motion control add-ons causing even more jumping, flailing and waving in living rooms across the world.

There are quite a few costume take-aways from the developments of the game systems in nearly 40 years of console gaming. Games started out as short arcade style games but can now be weeks of heavily plotted gorgeously visualized interactive movies. The characters therein started as boxes and can now express almost the full range of human emotion. Character costumes have gone from irrelevant due to low resolution to endlessly customizable wardrobes that some players will even spend real money to acquire. As we spend more and more time with increasingly complex characters we can't help but develop emotional relationships with some of them which may seem irrational to our friends and families. As a costumer I cannot help but see the great potential. Game developers, depending on the

Though graphics continue to improve, game designers keep returning to their 2D roots, going head to head with some of the best anime has to offer and confusing the hell out of anyone not familiar with cosplay.

This was video game costuming in the 1980s. Show some respect.

game, can ignore such petty concerns as fashion, practicality, material weight, cost, social conventions and even gravity when dressing their characters, and increasingly more time is spent on getting the look of the character just right since they know the gamers will be spending countless hours with them. Few other medias have such relatively effortless artistic freedom, and that opens up previously unseen worlds for costumers and brings us an ever flowing source both for inspiration and recreation.

10 Questions For A Costumer

with Mette Hedin

Lance Ikegawa

I have only met Lance Ikegawa twice but he is a costumer that is hard not to notice. In both of our encounters we were entering the same masquerade and in both cases he was one of the scariest people in the green room. Not scary as a person of course, he has always seemed like a very friendly and approachable type, but scary in skills for the other competitiors. Lance is better at working with foam than pretty much any costumer I have met, manipulating it into amazing foundations for his costumes. For the first time ever I am regretting that Yipe is not printed in 3 dimensions, because the pictures don't quite do his costumes justice.

Photo by Lionel Lum

1 *What was your first costume?*

A werewolf costume (natch!). Based on the John Talbain character from the video game Darkstalkers. Boy, did I learn a lot—mostly I learned that if someone knowledgeable says, "That's not a good idea," you should listen. Still, I'm a big believer in trying it your own way regardless— I learned by actual experience why things are done a certain way. This was very helpful later when my understanding of these things helped me experiment with new techniques.

2 *Costumer or Cosplayer?*

Cospumer? I guess I'd lean more to costumer– mostly because I'm interested in any venue that allows me to wear a monster costume in public and not be arrested or shot…

Personally, I consider the separation of Costuming and Cosplay to be an imaginary distinction. Cosplay, after all, originated from a Japanese animator who was so impressed with the costuming at an American science fiction convention (the Los Angeles Worldcon in 1984) that he extolled Japanese fans to be as creative. You know how if you take an English phrase and translate it into Japanese and back into English you end up with something familiar, but distinctly different from the original phrase? That's how I see the two venues: each has its unique qualities and traditions, but both are examples of fannish creativity. I think that Costuming and Cosplay share more than they differ and each can inspire and be inspired by the other.

3 *What is your favorite material right now?*

Wonderflex, evac foam and leather, in that order. I'm just now discovering how versatile Wonderflex is and how easy to use and non-toxic the material is. Armor is suddenly very appealing. I love the control one has with evac foam: you can really get some specific shapes from it. Leather is so good for so many things, particularly if you are going to distress it for props and costumes. No artificial material comes close to it.

4 *Loner or Collaborator?*

That depends on what aspect you are asking about. When building a costume, I almost always collaborate with someone. For the last ten years or so this has mostly been Lynette Eklund. She is so much better at draping and sewing that I am much happier leaving that to her. As far as subject goes, I usually do my own thing because my interests are a bit too eclectic and often based on something obscure that got me excited (where others are baffled by my enthusiasm). However– I much prefer to collaborate and do things with groups. I love my cosplay group, AGSMA (Anything Goes School of Masquerade Arts), because we play well together and everyone works very hard to make everything excel, from the costumes to the actual skit.

5 *Make or Buy?*

I don't have a mania about making everything myself. That leads to a bad case of OCD. Where would you draw the line? Buy fur or weft it yourself? I choose expediency: whatever will help me create a creature efficiently, achieve an effect. Buy fur; make muscles; buy belt; make claws, etc. The one exception that can go either way are eyes: it all depends on what I'm trying to achieve as to whether I paint eyes from blanks or domes or buy taxidermy glass eyes.

6 *What costume are you the proudest of?*

Ack. The question asks a one-part answer, but there are so many different costumes that mean a lot to me. So I'll cheat:

Most Fun To Wear: Blue Meanie

Most Impressive: Komamura from the anime series, Bleach.

Favorite: John Talbain (from the Japanese game Darkstalkers)

Everything Came Together Perfectly (the second time): We Lost—Mortimer the Warg and Warg Rider (with Lynette Eklund as the rider).

If I had to pick just one that qualified as "Most Proud Of" it would have to be the Komamura costume: my first crack at armor and I managed to create a fox head that fit under a helmet and still allowed me to see through both. That costume had the most math used in the creation of the patterns.

7 *Historical or Science Fiction/Fantasy?*

Oh, SF&F, naturally. More monsters and creatures (unless you consider dinosaurs or legendary beasts to be "historical").

8 *Why do you costume?*

Some god-complex disorder, probably. I like to bring things to life and entertain people. I'm also terribly stage-shy, so anything that completely hides me is wonderful.

9 *What costume would you rather forget?*

No costume, but two skits that had catastrophic failures: the first version of the Okami skit with AGSMA at a large anime con that had… technical problems. And of course there's me blithely trundling off the stage at the San Jose Costume Con. If there are any specific costumes that I'd like to forget, I've done a perfectly effective job of forgetting.

10 *What is the greatest lesson you have learned from costuming?*

Two things: the more you do, the better you get. Making your first costume (whether furry- or fabric-based) becomes an epiphany of knowledge.

Also, eyes. Eyes are the window to the soul…and the first thing that anyone looks at when they see a creature costume. I sometimes spend more time on this area than any other part of the costume. Great eyes will distract from a myriad of mistakes elsewhere…

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October 19, 2011

Dear Yipe!ettes:

Still coming down from the Reno blast, I see…Vol. 3, No.9 of Yipe! should bring back some good memories. As Jason sits on the pointy end of the Throne, I will cook up coms comments.

Jason: I could get used to that throne...

Yup, Chris won a Hugo, and I think he's still coming down from it. Wonder how he'll react when he wins the Hugo in Chicago for Best Dramatic Presentation – Short Form?

Jason: If he gets nominated for that, I swear to God I will picket the ceremony.

In all the costuming I've done, I have never had a weapon, not even a cheap plastic phaser. I've never liked weaponry, and I prefer to keep my hands free.

Jason: As a consummate alcoholic, I completely agree with minimizing the amount of clutter in one's hands when attending a party. Then again, many a cosplay lives or dies by the surfboard-sized sword being touted around.

I sent him a Facebook message, but…in the Toronto

subway, there are signs promoting the Penguin edition of Lev Grossman's The Magician King, plus the original The Magicians. That was a great party, and I think Lev is going places with his novels. I have recommended him to our local literary conventions, and we might see him again soon. Want to come up to Toronto, Lev?

Looks like Kevin and Andy may have found out one of the bits of wisdom I picked up over the years…if you tray to run the show and want to see the show, you could easily wind up doing neither. Spectacular show, guys, and the Blue Meanie was great, especially for those of us old enough to remember the movie.

Jason: Lance impressed us so much with that Blue Meanie, we just had to have him for 10 Questions. I still boggle at how he pulled it off.

It was great to finally meet Jean at the convention. I always enjoy finally placing a person to a name…a photo is good, but it's not enough. Met Christopher, too, but he was underwhelmed. Can't impress them all, I guess. Costuming allows for another level of involvement, and the opportunity to impress others with your handiwork.

Jason: To me, not meeting Jean Martin at a West Coast con is like going to a Doctor Who convention and not seeing the scarf. Just doesn't happen, but something would be wrong if it did.

The Magical School Challenge was insane, and Yvonne had a blast at it. There she is in her homemade Slytherin robes…we still haven't gotten her a Slytherin school tie. Gotta do that soon, or for Christmas.

Jason: No offense, but she makes a seriously good Slytherin.

I wore one costume on site, my steampunk railway conductor costume, but never did get into the others I brought. Too warm, not enough time, happy just to hang out in shirt and shorts, and relax. Besides, I could see myself sweating through my costumes just walking between the convention centre and the hotel. Chicago has the perfect convention layout… the convention centre is right below you.

Jason: Clearly, you need to retrofit a scooter into a tiny locomotive for your conductor.

I'm done, folks…Yvonne got herself hired where she's been contracting, so there's a little pressure off. I still have to find myself something, so wish me luck. Take it easy, and see you with the next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Letter from the [evil] Editor

I was definitely at sea when we started planning a videogame issue. The only arcade game I was any good at was Tempest, and then only when being coached. I've always preferred puzzle games like Myst or Starship Titanic to games with costumed avatars. Fortunately, Killpurakat (Courtney) came to my rescue with some marvelous tales of her adventures in video cosplay.

As I write this, Andy and I have recently survived this year's Best Buck in The Bay Gay Rodeo; this year we sponsored the Wild Drag Race and were persuaded to attempt Goat Dressing ourselves (short version: we didn't win, but we succeeded in dressing our goat, and I'm apparently really speedy in my FiveFinger shoes). Photos in a future Yipe. Next year we plan to offer a prize for best drag to encourage greater effort in the W.D.G.

Westercon 66 (http://www.westercon66.org), the Little Hoax That Could, is now at over 150 members; we expect to have a hotel lined up by Hallowe'en.

Coming up: Alternative Press Expo, the Pacific International Quilt Festival, VintaCon, and of course, Hallowe'en (with a couple of early costume parties), all, I hope, sources of ample exposition for future pages of Yipe.

Send all complaints to:
Kevin@yipezine.com

ART

October 2011