

# Cosplay? Costumes? What's the Difference?



The third annual Rhode Island Comic Con has come and gone. The topic flooding social media and word of mouth surrounds the overcapacity incident that left many out in the rain on the first day. However, while putting that to the side, what stood out was the 20,000 in attendance, many wearing attire ranging from generic Halloween costumes to the most elaborate character likenesses one could find. There were contests, group photos, and some handing out their own business cards, such as Iron Bat, a gentleman in a steam-punk Batman suit with retractable wings.

When talking with a few around the Comic Con, one might hear the term “cosplay” used quite often. To those new to the convention scene, this might be something new, but in fact it’s a community that goes back decades. So what actually separates the cosplayers from the regular costumed fans?

“The only difference between costumes and cosplay attire is that I think there might be a bit more attention to detail for the latter,” said Crysta Mendes, a huge Marvel fan sporting her Black Widow attire with matching red wig. “Other than that, I don’t think there’s much of a reason to differentiate between the two.”

Cosplay.com’s forum opened up the question and one user, Jeyel04, responded, “Cosplaying is like giving homage to the character you are doing. Wearing the character’s costume means you have to bring the character into life.”

Some costumes were very, very detailed, including weapons, LED lights, contact lenses and the right shade of fabric. That kind of attention to detail does take up quite a bit of time and requires a lot of passion.

“The longest devotion so far is Anubis from Zone of the Enders,” said Julia Coelho, a popular local cosplayer who has been part of the community since 2006. “I haven’t even made ample progress. I have it blue printed, but can’t figure out how to execute it.”

But to those who devote their free time and energy, it's absolutely worth it. "Cosplay is important to me because it gives me a chance to feel good and inspire others. I have a plethora of medical issues, but I use them to my advantage," said Coelho.

Even with the overcrowding negativity that occurred at this year's Comic Con, rest assure that with all future cons in the area, you'll still see the community thriving.

"Cosplaying and conventions gives me a chance to be unabashed about my hobbies and interests," said Mendes. "While I'm not ashamed about the sort of things I enjoy, I know I'm walking with a similar crowd when I enter a convention."