

Spotlight Review



Book Review: *Critter Costuming* Presented by "Patch Packrat"

A book dealer and member of the Furry community presents two reviews of the bible of fursuit making.

Introduction by "Patch Packrat"

Hello, *Virtual Costumer* readers. Editor Philip Gust asked me to review the book *Critter Costuming: Making Mascots and Fabricating Fursuits* by Adam Riggs (ISBN 0-9678170-7-2), published by Ibexa Press. He found me as a professional dealer who helps distribute the book.

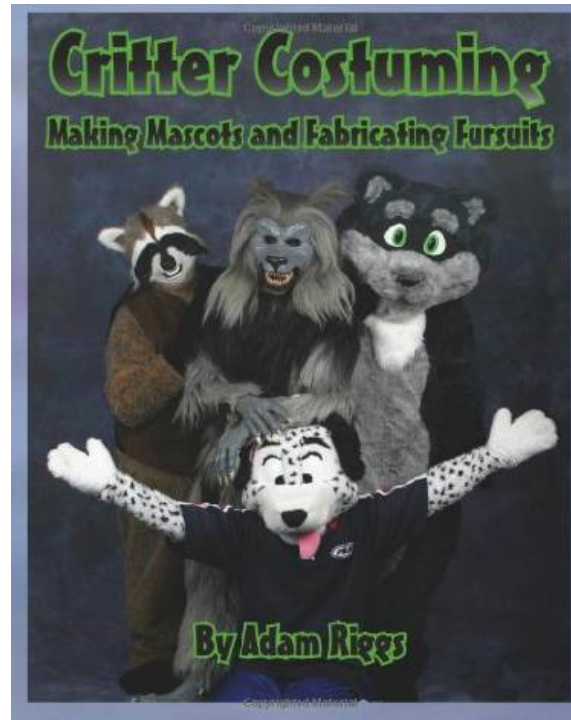
For two years I've done events and conventions every month, usually with my fursuit as a Husky Dog. I don't make costumes, I just wear them, so I put out a

Editor's Note

The Editor is grateful to "Patch Packrat" for generously reaching out to the Furry community and asking fursuit builders for reviews of this classic book. Visit his FurAffinity [journal post](#) for information on how to purchase the book, and for other fursuit resources.

request to the Furry community for reviews of the book. The two reviews included here were the ones I selected to present.

My own observation is that the book could use an update on newer techniques, and innovations such as animatronics, lighting, or improved formulas for glue. Current information can be found by looking up internet tutorials from active makers. Some makers achieve original style using techniques of their own that only come from experience.



The book is a slow but stable seller in my stock, and due to the niche quality of the hobby, I expect it to remain a foundation reference for many years before anyone sees fit to make a new edition.

Reviewer: Chris Czikra



This book was a long time coming. Within it's pages, you'll find knowledge of nearly every aspect of planning, constructing, and performing in a fur suit. I stress "nearly", which I'll explain below. That said, this book has enough detail to give anyone the skill to step into this inspired world of D.I.Y. costuming.

"Fur suit" is a buzzword given to animal costumes, resembling mascots, that are worn to entertain others or bring personal enjoyment as your own character. Don't let the word throw you off, because the suit is only an aid for immersive role playing. This book places a wealth of knowledge at the disposal of anyone willing to tackle the challenge that fursuit creation can pose.

The first section presented in *Critter Costuming* is character creation. Not many tutorials I've found cover this in depth. It provokes the reader to consider what the character is, who it is, and it's traits. Some

characters I've seen fail this test, because they answer questions about themselves with a shrug, and reply 'I just wanted to'. There is a place for improv, but a character should avoid being two-dimensional.

By actively planning who your character is, you can make them more memorable. The broader view helps give an underlying understanding to help you create your own character, in a way that works for you.

The bulk of this book does deal with construction, as you might expect. It begins with a lighter section to cover needed tools, with an impressive amount of information in a modest space. It explains needle types, thread, foam, dye, fabric, and glue. It's a lot to process, considering how online tutorials can dive right into specific tools and materials.

Construction is so varied that there's no one set way to make a suit. I could nitpick and go over methods I know that weren't in the book, such as other ways to construct and fur a head, but that doesn't devalue it.

The different selections, details, and reasons behind jumpsuit construction methods make this book worth every cent. This is the section of the book where I really started to get hints of it's broader purpose. The section on makeup, ears, tails, and accessories mentions more and more about performance. That topic may not be the reason why an aspiring maker would pick it up, but it makes the book more accessible.

The last section covers another topic that's harder to find online: acting. It discusses behavior in suit, what to expect from helpers, and even gimmicks to use in performance. What kind of performance? The advice is mainly geared for crowds and venues. It is interesting, but may not be essential. A lot of fursuiters perform in public places, but not strictly in one controlled spot, and they may have a casual convention setting. This leads to cases where the book's tips can differ from fan fursuiter needs.

If you have an interest in costume and performance, this book is perfect for exploring the specialty of cartoon animal costumes and fursuits. It covers much more

than just construction. If you supplement it with online knowledge, you will be armed with everything you need to make a fursuit and perform as a character in public. Whether your interest is professional or personal, this book is worth picking up.

Reviewer: Ray Stankewitz



The back cover states; "*Critter Costuming: Making Mascots and Fabricating Fursuits* is the first book of its kind." I believe it's the only book of its kind, as far as I'm aware.

Mascot and Fursuit construction is one of those niche hobbies that doesn't have a huge following. Adam Riggs' manual takes one through the necessary steps to create a well-constructed costume from start to finish. From personal experience, it sure beats digging around on the Internet, printing out numerous pages and trying to keep them organized.

Critter Costuming has over 200 well laid-out pages. It was originally published with a spiral binding to lay it flat for reference while you work, but the current version in print is a perfect-bound softcover. The illustrations are well-done to compliment the text. It has six parts and a resources section that cover each subject carefully. There are profiles of twelve notable costume creators throughout that are practically worth the price alone.



Part I covers design and planning. I can't begin to tell you how important this is. This will make or break your first suit if the design is not well thought out. Too many times an idea is put forth that has many design flaws. Without a guide, too much time is spent trying to bring a design to fruition only to realize at some point, it can't be done. Adam recommends starting simple, within your construction means and skills to achieve success with your first suit.

Part II covers Tools and Materials. Making a costume goes beyond scissors and needle. Many suits fail due to poor construction. That would include using hot-glue for everything, over-use of spray adhesive, or heaven forbid, the dreaded duct-tape! There are appropriate times to use hot glue, such as head fur seams, but the only proper use of duct tape is creating a "Duct Tape Dummy" of your body for proper fitting. Adam Riggs takes you through the supplies needed to properly construct a costume that will stay together from performance to performance.

Part III covers the various forms of head construction. The head and particularly the eyes are the soul of the suit. You are guided through what might be the most daunting part of construction. While Adam only covers foam and wire framework heads, these are fine for your first attempts. After constructing a few heads in the aforementioned styles, you will have basic knowledge to pursue other, more complicated systems such as slush-molded

resin, foam rubber/balaclava, or foam latex/balaclava hybrids.

Part IV covers body construction. Adam covers the art of taking a stock bodysuit pattern and customizing it to your needs, and other bodysuit methods, such as using lycra/spandex unitards and partial clothing. It also mentions zipper installation, an often overlooked but vital part of fursuits.

Part V covers alternatives to using a full head, namely face paint, makeup and prosthetics. For some, a full head is not the answer or possibly not a consideration. Tail construction is also covered, along with props and costumes.



Acquiring Good Tools

If you're serious about costuming and plan to make money at it, I urge you to invest in high-quality tools. When you set out to build your first costume you are also beginning the process of equipping your workshop. Purchasing tools is an investment and can be quite expensive. Do not include the cost of buying tools as part of the expense of your first costume. During your first costume project, you'll probably have to purchase quite a few tools.

With tools, it's definitely true that you get what you pay for. Cheap tools will last through only one or two projects before they need replacement. It makes sense to buy durable tools and make your investment last. Higher quality tools are usually easier to use, prevent injury and strain, and improve the quality of your work. If you want to save money during your first project, I would advise you to buy fewer tools rather than inferior tools. That way should you decide to continue making costumes, the tools you've purchased will have been worthwhile investments. Planning here can quickly pay dividends. See Chapter 5 for more detailed information on the tools you will need and how to set up your workspace.

A collection of costuming tools.

Part VI covers getting to conventions intact, performing, and eventually the need to store your suit. The need for a 'handler' is covered along with the suiters' commandments and etiquette. There are performance tips and suggestions to make your performance stand out.

The last section covers resources and reference, with a glossary to help newbies with the vernacular of the genre.

This is an indispensable manual for a "suiter." It helped me prepare a trio of

costumes for 'family suiting.' Without this manual, we were totally in the dark. It led us to backtrack, regroup and get on the right track.

Common advice says to create a "suit zero" for practice, before starting a real one, but I'm confident this manual will guide you to a successful first suit. My hat is off to Adam Riggs for putting such a useful resource in print for the first time!

"Patch Packrat" is the Furry alter-ego of a professional dealer who helps distribute "Critter Costuming" at a low cost to help spread the hobby. "Patch's" career includes animating for Disney and having Steve Jobs as a customer. He lives in a cave full of treasure, and is most happy while biking, having late night adventures, and dancing with woodland creatures. Visit "Patch's" [journal post](#) on FurAffinity for information on purchasing this book and other furry related items.

Chris Czakra ("Schrix") is an Alaskan born member of the Furry fandom living in North Carolina. He's finishing an associates in networking technology and has been a part of the fandom for over a decade.

Ray Stankewitz ("Kellan Meig'h") is a husband, father, and grandfather who works as a communications technician for a K-12 school district. His novel "[Destiny's Change](#)" can be found through a number of sources. He has been active (as his personal life permits) in the furry fandom, from a time before fursuiters were known as "furs."