

# Feature



## Basic Black: A Different Jafar William H. Kennedy

*The “punch line” of the “Basic Black”*

*presentation at Costume-Con 31 talks about creating a very different “Jafar” from the traditional image of this Disney villain.*

As the punch line of the “Little Black Dress” presentation, it was my job to undertake the task of creating the costume and become “Jafar.” This costume was definitely a labor of love, creativity, outward thinking and moments of psychotic behavior.

For those who do not know, “Jafar” is Royal Vizier of Agrabah and is the main antagonist in the classic Disney animated feature film *Aladdin*. “Jafar” is portrayed as an amoral psychopath who'll not hesitate to destroy anyone he perceives as a threat to his own sinister designs. This personality fit me perfectly!

In terms of creating a costume, I needed to study his bone structure as well as his body type. As you may know, Disney does not necessary animate human-based characters as correctly proportioned. “Jafar” is a tall, bony, almost malnourished figure who dresses in extravagant robes of velvets

“Jafar” in robe and outer skirt. (right) Photo: Don Searle.



and silks: not necessarily “Mr. Tall-Dark-and-Handsome.” We decided that our presentation would have a *Rocky Horror Picture Show* twist, revealing “Jafar” as a “Frank-N-Furter” character.

I created the robe in two pieces. The first was the triangle torso with exaggerated shoulder extensions. For this, I used a modified princess dress pattern ([Simplicity 1773](#)) with a knee-high skirt. It was made in heavy black velvet and lined in red satin. The lower part of the skirt was packed and faded with over 2000 individually placed Swarovski Crystals, which I attached using [e3600](#) adhesive in a syringe. They made for a very sparkly reveal at the end.



The princess dress pattern had sleeves that would not work. Instead, I built the dress sleeveless and attached the red satin sleeves of the costume to a black t-shirt that I wore under the dress. The sleeves had attached elbow-length black velvet cuffs that push the red silk sleeve up in a natural balloon puff. I used a gather stitch to make them poofy.

To conceal the *Rocky Horror* reveal, I made a second over-skirt from the same pattern by adding length and width to it. To allow it to blend and be easily removable, the lower part of the skirt was attached to a red sash belt that was completed as a single piece. It was made of sandwiched layers of heavy canvas with an overlay of red satin, folded and hand stitched in place to resemble a hand-wrapped sash. It was fastened with a Velcro clasp in the back. The outer skirt is fully lined in red satin and all seams are covered in decorative black ribbon. (It only shows for a half second, but it made me happy!)



The hat was created using buckram as a base for the head. It was sculpted in carpet foam (Elmer's Rubber Cement is my best friend), and was then covered in black velvet and hand stitched in place. The gem in the front is a red plastic jewel from a kids toy, with left over Christmas ribbon wrapped around. Gold bias tape was used to create the gold lines in the hat.

The hat is in the shape of a cobra's head to show how "snake-like" he can be. I used red satin for the cowl and skin-toned spandex for the neckpiece. The cowl is sewn to the back of the hat and is cut so it drapes over the shoulders. The skin-toned spandex is held in place by two snaps on either side of the hat, just under the ear.

The heels were fun to make and the most awful things to walk in. (For those who want to know I take a size 16.) I started with white plastic heels that I covered in the same black velvet on the body, and used the red satin on the heel. I used hundreds of crystals to create another pack and fade on each heel.

The corset was created in several pieces and laces up. It was made of red satin with gold bias tape trim. Although it is only decorative, the corset is fully boned with plastic boning. I used strips of lace in the front and then hand-placed hundreds of crystals on the corset to create sparkle for the big reveal.

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"Evil Queen" (Reagan McHugh) removing outer skirt. Photo: Don Searle



“Jafar” has a twisted, black goatee and a faint mustache, as well as grey eyeliner. I made extensions from an old curly wig and attached it to my real goatee. To keep it twisted I wrapped it around a 3/4” tube and used hair spray. I colored my own goatee with black eye liner to match the extensions

As for accessories, “Jafar” is always seen carrying gold, ruby-eyed, cobra headed staff to supplement his magical powers. The staff was created using an old flagpole. Since this had to go on a plane, I cut it into three pieces and used two-way screws to put them back together. The cobra head was created by cutting up and re- working an old Halloween prop and stapling it to the pole. The entire thing was spray painted gold and red eyes were added.

This was truly a fun costume that took about one month of preparation and research and an additional 72 hours of work. The best part was that I was able to obtain 15 yards of black heavy velvet from a yard sale for \$2 (yea!) It was worth the 72 hours of

labor for the sheer joy I got to hearing crowd cheer “ohh” and “ahh” and admire the costume. Best, however, was the screaming and laughing when the reveal occurred to show a sweet transvestite “Jafar.”

*William H. Kennedy is Master Costumer who began costuming in 2010 as a hobby and earned his Masters Level Status at Costume Con Denver in 2013. In his professional Life William is an Investigator with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families and works to protect the most vulnerable children in the state. However, when he is not protecting youth and working with families, William spends his time scaring the "yell" out of them. William has done make up, costume, set designs and builds for various Haunted attractions such as Spooky World Theme Park and is currently an artistic contributor, costume, makeup and actor at Haunted Overload located in Lee NH. His alter ego Tickles The Clown is currently running for President and can be found at Haunted Overload making grown men cry and picking small children out of his teeth. Truly a delightful individual.*



Patterning sholder sleeves. (above) Photo: author. “Jafar” after the big reveal. (right). Photo: Don Searle.