

Cosplay scene in DHAKA



Stretching its roots from Japan for a universal reach, the moniker of 'costume' and 'play' has translated into a cultural phenomenon. Whether you are enacting Ash Ketchum from Pokémon or channelling your inner Harley Quinn; playacting your favourite characters and stepping into their world provides an alluring escape and there is nothing quite like it.



PHOTO COURTESY:
TASNUVA ASHRAF,
COSPLAYER

While cosplaying can seem esoteric at first glance, the concept is not too difficult to understand at all. Since its coinage and the art hitting Dhaka city for the first time, the mere hobby evolved into a vast and far-reaching community.

"Cosplaying is the new thing on the block and the trend is only gravitating upwards," said Tanvir Hossain Jesan, an artiste who has made quite a name for himself on the cosplay scene. "I used to find myself hiding in corners or amidst shadows of my rather conservative family. Being a cosplayer, I can come out of my shyness and feel like I'm on my own turf," he added.

Tasnuva Ashraf's confession was even simpler, "Some people sing, others paint, I cosplay. Cosplaying is my only refuge from the mundane routine of my everyday life. How else can you don elaborate costumes with accurate makeup?"

Recalling her first experience at a convention, Tasnuva Ashraf still fondly remembers whispers of everyone wanting to take a picture with the new 'Wonder Woman!' Perhaps it is Ashraf who puts explains the passion in a nutshell — "Once you step into the convention, you feel like a celebrity as the limelight focuses on you."

Several performers have now taken the giant leap from becoming a 'passionate' performer to a professional.

Naziha Amin, cosplayer and a regular member of jury panels at various conventions, gives another perspective, "As a bashful geek, cosplaying is my way of paying ultimate tribute to the characters I grew up watching and learnt so much from. I cosplay characters I can relate to and I love piecing together my own creations."

Yet, even Amin admits that the borders of Bangladesh may not be ready to acknowledge 'cosplaying' as a hobby just yet. "A cosplayer is a craftsman; they are not to be confused with a mascot!"

The performer must earn their coveted esteem and the rhapsodies of praise they

so eagerly yearn for. To secure the Holy Grail, you cannot simply borrow a costume and show

up at Comic-Con to take pictures in HD. A costume commands attention and the full knowledge of the biography of the character. It has to be put together piece by piece and bit by bit. Materials have to be accumulated with fabrics needing cuts and stitches and foam rubbers requiring painting and shaping. Wigs, masks, robes and cloaks want meticulous detailing and basic accessories of wood must have carving.

Naziha Amins scoring numerous accolades under her belt resulted from her ardent keenness in cosplaying. Tasnuva Ashraf's passion fuelled her creativity demanding to be expressed. As for Jesan, his love for cosplaying sees him surging through crowded alleys to find the perfect additions to his ever-changing costumes. Yet all things aside, the three unite in their opinions and unanimously cite cosplaying to be just fun.

Feeling at home with the warmth of acceptance from fellow cosplayers and developing a community that forces you out of your shell is something unique. Uncle Ben said it best, "With great power comes great responsibility." A true cosplayer faces the grave task of staying true to the character s/he believes himself to be. And it's only through his pure portrayal that his ardent passion for the art can really shine through.

By Ramisa Haque

Model: Naziha Amin

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

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