



In August 2011 I got the opportunity to represent The Netherlands at the World Cosplay Summit together with Diana de Mol.

What is cosplay?

Cosplay is a contraction of the English words “Costume” and “Play”, started in Japan.

Fans are dressing up as characters from manga, anime, and video games.

Now cosplay is known worldwide and cosplay became a term for someone wearing a costume and being in character.

As a cosplayer you are not only making costumes, also making props and creating a performance and being faithful to your character and the series you are portraying is something important.

You are able to cosplay at events and conventions, there are small competitions but also international ones, who gives you the chance to represent your own country in an other country to show them what cosplay is about in your home country.

The oldest one is the World Cosplay Summit.

What is the World Cosplay Summit?

The World Cosplay championship started in 2005 and is organized to pick up a “Grand Champion” through stage performances and costumes by representative teams from each participating country. The championship is based on the finish of the costume design and the teams performance on stage. Started with three countries participating, but in 2011, 17 countries participated with Malaysia and The Netherlands participating for the first time.

The "World Cosplay Summit" was created to promote international exchange through the Japanese youth culture of manga, anime and videogames.

The free and dynamic nature of manga was important in the birth of cosplay. Nowadays youth from around the world find this as a common language and a dynamic new form of global interaction. The World Cosplay Summit began in Osu, Nagoya and has grown to include 17 countries from around the world. If you count audience and participants at each preliminary event, the number of people involved is now in the 100s of thousands.

Preliminaries

Each country who participates in the WCS has a preliminary event to select their cosplayers which takes place at a Japan related expo or convention. In The Netherlands the organizer of this event is Animecon.

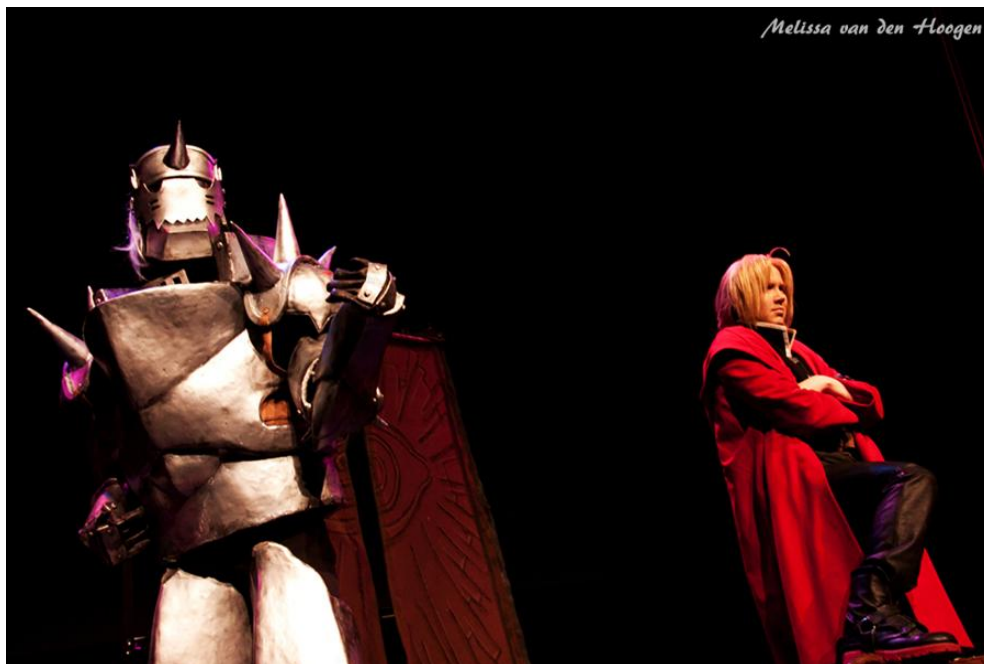
For The Netherlands this was the first time that preliminaries for the WCS was held. They announced it very late, just 8 weeks before the convention so for all the cosplayers who wanted to participate there was not much time left to prepare something.

To participate you must have a team of 2 cosplayers cosplaying Japan related characters from an anime, manga or videogame, original designs are not allowed. The costumes and props must be handmade by the cosplayers themselves.

Because we had not much time I decided not to make completely new costumes but to use something I already got, I teamed up with Rick and both we builded one costume and created our props and stage performance. There was a pre-judging round based on costume construction before the stage performance. The judges had a look on our costumes from up-close and asked some questions. And then was the stage performance.

Backstage there was a good atmosphere, there are not many cosplayers in The Netherlands so everyone knows each other and that's also why nobody was competitive and were aiding each other backstage if someone needed help.

There were 6 teams who participated for the WCS and Rick and I where chosen to represent our country in Japan because of our good costumes, precise sewing work, finishing touches and hilarious skit who represented the series and characters very well. We selected ourself as Edward Elric and Alphonse Elric from the anime and manga series Fullmetal Alchemist, with Rick portraying as Alphonse and I as Edward. Our skit was based on the first anime series because we like the sense of humor in it.



Stage performance at Animecon

Process to the “finals” in Japan

This was my most horrible but also most instructive experience ever.

We almost had everything done for the WCS when just a week before we should take the plane to Japan Rick decided not to go to Japan due to circumstances with his family.

We called the Dutch organizer and explained the situation and he said that I need a new partner immediately. Because there was almost no time left I needed a partner who was able to create something great and from high quality in an extremely insane short time period. First person who came up in my mind was Diana de Mol. So I called her, explained her everything and was begging her for help. After she realized it was serious we started brainstorming like crazy through e-mail, because she was never able to fit Rick’s costume or to do the skit we planned because it needed a lot of preparation time and we had no time anymore!

So the Monday I went to Diana with some stuff I already got and was hoping to get everything done before we took the plane on Sunday.

So this meant we had just 6 days to make the costumes for the finals, to build the props and to create an act with just 2 persons!!

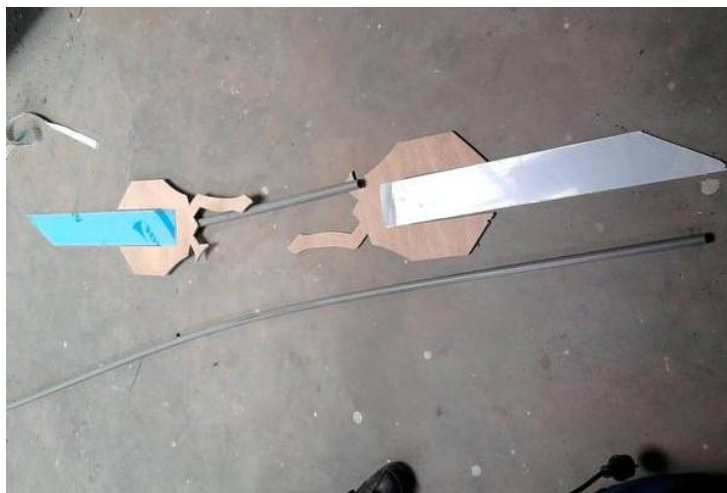
So the hell started, through e-mail we already confirmed the costumes for the finals which would be Arika Yumemiya and Nina Wáng from the Mai-Otome manga.

The Monday we brainstormed about the skit because TV-Aichi wanted the script and performance sheet as fast as possible. That day we first bought all the materials we needed for the performance, sewed some things together and brainstormed about the skit.

Due the lack of time we decided to pick up a song which should fit Nina Wáng very well and go for a simple performance, because creating a spectacular performance including props and costumes in 6 days is impossible. We were busy with the music and performance sheet for the skit till extremely late in the night and send everything to our organizer.

After 4 hours of sleep, Tuesday, we started to work on our costumes again and decided to break through the night and not to sleep.

The Wednesday we worked on our wigs and wanted the costumes to be finished as far as possible. Because there were so many details in the costume design we decided to skip some details due the lack of time, was a difficult decision but we had no choice. We did go to bed extremely late and got up really early, so the Thursday we worked on the props and choreography for our performance.



One of the 3 stage props in process made within one day

The Friday the LED-strips for our costumes arrived, first we worked on the finishing touches of the costumes and finished our stage props as far as possible and then we soldered and installed all the LED-strips in both costumes till extremely late in the night.

Saturday, LAST day to work on our costumes and props!! We painted our props, rehearsed our skit a little bit and worked on the armor parts and the finishing touches of our costumes.

Also we needed to pack everything for Japan. So we made a big checklist to be sure we should not forget anything and so we packed till extremely late in the night again.

The Sunday we got up really early and as big zombies because of the all-nighters we did go to the airport, met our organizer and took the plane to Japan with the stuff we got and being put together in 6 days, it is extremely insane and I can cry and laugh about it at the same time when I think back of it!



Bye bye Netherlands, zzzzzzzz!!

Tokyo

We arrived at Narita Monday morning August the 1st 9 am local time. After a flight of 11 hours we turned in even bigger zombies and took the train to Tokyo, dumped our suitcases in the hotel and we got a trip through Tokyo and tried to defeat our jet-lag.

So we spent the 1st and 2nd of August in Tokyo visiting Ueno, Akihabara, Shibuya and met Goldy who is awesome with building mecha costumes and spend some time in his workshop. Diana and I started laughing after we discovered we made the armor parts on our costumes on exactly the same way how Goldy makes it.

In the evening we met some of the other teams from Malaysia, China, Mexico and America. We had a nice dinner and I tried loads of traditional Japanese food and tea which was really delicious! In the hotel we spend some time with team Malaysia to work on our costumes till late in the night.

Wednesday the 3th was the start of the tight schedule of the WCS. We left the hotel for a visit to the Ministry of Foreign and Affairs. We were asked to write a speech for the minister so we did. In our press costumes we met the Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Chiaki Takahashi. We answered some questions, talked about the disaster which has hit Japan in March and we did our speech. Our Dutch organizer also had a present for the minister, Clara the cow one of the mascot's of Animecon. The most ironical was that the creator of the characters Diana and I represented draws herself as a cow, so we both were laughing our asses off when we imagined that Hiromu Arakawa took the newspaper the next morning and sees a picture of an Edward cosplayer giving a cow to the minister.



The minister seems to be happy with the present

After our visit to the minister we rushed to the next event, the Great East Japan Earthquake live charity event with Seiendan.

Some Japanese voice-actors gave a nice performance and answered some questions. The event ended very late and after the show there was a plan to take the bus to Nagoya to arrive there at 3 am. Our Dutch organizer wasn't happy about that and decided that we are going to Nagoya with the Shinkansen. We arrived at the hotel in Nagoya around 12 am, dumped our luggage and did go to bed immediately.

Nagoya

The next day was a very relaxing day, the only thing on the schedule was a meeting with the technical staff from TV-Aichi, recording the introduction movie and some interviews in the evening. So Diana and I decided to double check our performance material and we discovered we needed to repair a lot because a lot was damaged during the transport.

We also met team Brazil and they told us that they lost their big hoop skirt during the flight and that also they have to look for material to make a new one from scratch.

We felt very sorry for them.

Together with our Dutch organizer we spend some time in Nagoya to find some material to repair our stuff. We visited Tokyu Hands which is an amazing store, they got literally everything! Diana and I were amazed by the crazy stuff they sold there! We thought we got crazy stuff in The Netherlands, but Japan is defeating us, I mean you can buy fish and insects on aqua fortis that's insane!

After we gathered our material we headed back to the hotel and spend the rest of our time to repair or props and to fix some things on the costumes.

In the evening we gathered in the lobby of the hotel with our organizer and waited for our turn to be interviewed. We heard the interviews and recordings got delayed for about 20 minutes so we decided to eat something. After that we got a ride to the place where the interviews and recordings were held and we had to wait in a waiting room where we met team Korea.

We also met team Spain and first we had a talk with the technical staff about our performance. Because the technical staff had never worked before with a phosphoric screen we are using in our skit, it was very difficult to explain what we wanted with the lightning. So we should have a look at it on the Saturday during the rehearsals.

After that we recorded our introduction movie which will be shown before our performance.

Ed wanted us to do something crazy so we did and ended up with "Hoi mam!" at the end, something typical Dutch.

Then we got interviewed, we told something about cosplay in our country and they asked a tip for the cosplayers when they will take part of the WCS. Well... Diana and I were both like; "Don't make everything within a week!"

And we are really serious about it!!

After everything was done we and our organizer got dropped outside and we were all like; "So now what, need to guess the way back to the hotel?" that failed, so we went back inside and told someone we have no idea how to go back to the hotel so they arranged a taxi for us.

Back in the hotel we fixed some stuff on our costumes and did go to bed.



Team photo for the interview

Friday the 5th we got up really early and gathered together with all the teams and the TV-Aichi staff, this was the first time I saw all the other teams. They introduced themselves and we choose the order of the performances for the “Championship” by picking up random envelopes.

Diana and I ended up in the 2nd stage on the 3rd place, which means we were number 8 which is in the middle. I was surprised that the teams who had to perform in the 1st stage were very unpleased. I mean it doesn't matter when you have to perform, you have worked for months on your costumes and performance so just show the audience what you've got, so never mind you are 1st or last to perform!

After that we took on our press costumes, the teams got separated in 2 groups, Diana and I were in group B. We headed of to the Nagoya Convention & Visitors Bureau, they welcomed us to Nagoya, gave us some nice presents and wished us a nice stay in Japan.

After that we headed to the Nagoya City Hall to meet the mayor of Nagoya. Mayor Kawamura appeared as Picolo Daimaō from Dragonball and asked us some questions about the preliminary round and cosplayers in our country. After that we took some photos and the press asked us some questions like; “Does the mayor of your hometown also wear cosplay”? Of course not, our mayor will put us in jail when we will visit him while wearing costumes!

Then we went to Centrair Airport for a photoshoot with all the teams. There were a lot of cosplayers and photographers, Diana and I had a lot of fun and some nice pictures were taken. We ended our visit at Centrair Airport with some group pictures and we took off our costumes.

In the evening we had a dinner and karaoke party with all the teams and organizers and we had a lot of fun!



At Centrair Airport, Diana and I doing crazy stuff like always

Red Carpet Parade and Osu Cosplay Parade

The Saturday the 6th was a really busy day, we got up really early to put on our parade costumes.

I did lost my boots so I was really happy I could lend some fitting boots from team America! Diana was a bit ill and wasn't ready yet so I headed off first to listen to the schedule of that day, but was worried about Diana because everyone asked me where she was.

I have sent our organizer to have a look at her.

We all gathered together in the lobby of the hotel, and luckily Diana was also there in costume ready to go. A cute girl was holding a sign with our country name written in Japanese and Dutch.

This was the most awesome experience of the WCS, it was amazing how a Red Carpet was blocking a whole street!

When Diana and I entered the Red Carpet the sound of shutters snapping keep going on and I kind of felt me as an important celebrity walking on the Red Carpet while I am just a little girl with a big passion of creating costumes!

It was really hot so Diana and I were happy we picked up costumes with not too much fabric. After all the teams entered the Red Carpet we took a group photo and headed of to the main temple of Osu Kannon to prepare our self for the big Osu Cosplay Parade.

Every team was announced one by one and took their place on the stairs in the front of the temple. We took a group picture and then the big parade started. There were photographers and people standing everywhere, it was truly amazing! The 16 foreign teams, 7 Japanese teams and 500 general cosplayers participated in the parade.



PHOTO BY ROUNA (BURN SEON LEE)

The Nishiki Boulevard Red Carpet Parade

After the parade we had to prepare our self for the rehearsals on stage, also there was a pre-judging based on costume construction, the judges were the organizers of each participating country. Our Dutch organizer was not very happy about that because he had no idea how to judge costumes and was asking Diana and me for tips. We couldn't help him with that, the only thing we know was that our costumes should be the worst of all because everything was rushed within a week and was missing details and finishing touches.

We headed of to the hotel to prepare our stuff and to be sure we will be there on time for the judging and rehearsal. We decided not to take the wigs with us because we didn't want to ruin them for the "finals" at Sunday.

We gathered in the lobby in our stage costumes and with our props too early and asked if we were able to go to Oasis 21 to the stage to build up our stage props because we were the first of the 2nd stage who has to rehears.

We were not allowed to go and had to wait for the other teams.

Finally we were going to the stage with the other teams and we started building up our props when Ed came to us and said it was our turn to rehears. Diana and I needed to disappoint him because we were not ready yet with building up our props and we gained no permission to build up our props earlier, so it was not our fault we were not ready yet for the rehearsal.

They moved our rehearsal to the end and we finished our stage props.

We gave the stagehands directions about the placements for our props, tested the lightning with the phosphor screen and I came to the conclusion that even when all the stage lights were off, there is still too much light around the stage from the building. Luckily you were still able to see what happens on the screen, but for the next time I know that things like glow in the dark or backlight will not work on this stage.

Diana and I did our FIRST decent rehearsal for the performance on stage because during the process we had no time to rehears because the costumes and props weren't done.

Of course it didn't go well but we where happy to do our thing on stage and that we did not forget the choreography.

After the lightning check, camera check, other technical things and stage rehearsal we went to the judges to judge our rushed costumes. Both Diana and I didn't give anything about it, we told our "made in one week" story, laughed about it and did go back to the hotel.

We prepared some last tiny things for the next day.



Osu Cosplay Parade, WCS participants gathered in the front of the Osu temple

“Championship” day

For the most cosplayers in the world the most important day, for me personal, a closing ceremony with all the other countries for taking part in all the events of the WCS and to make a great show all together on stage!

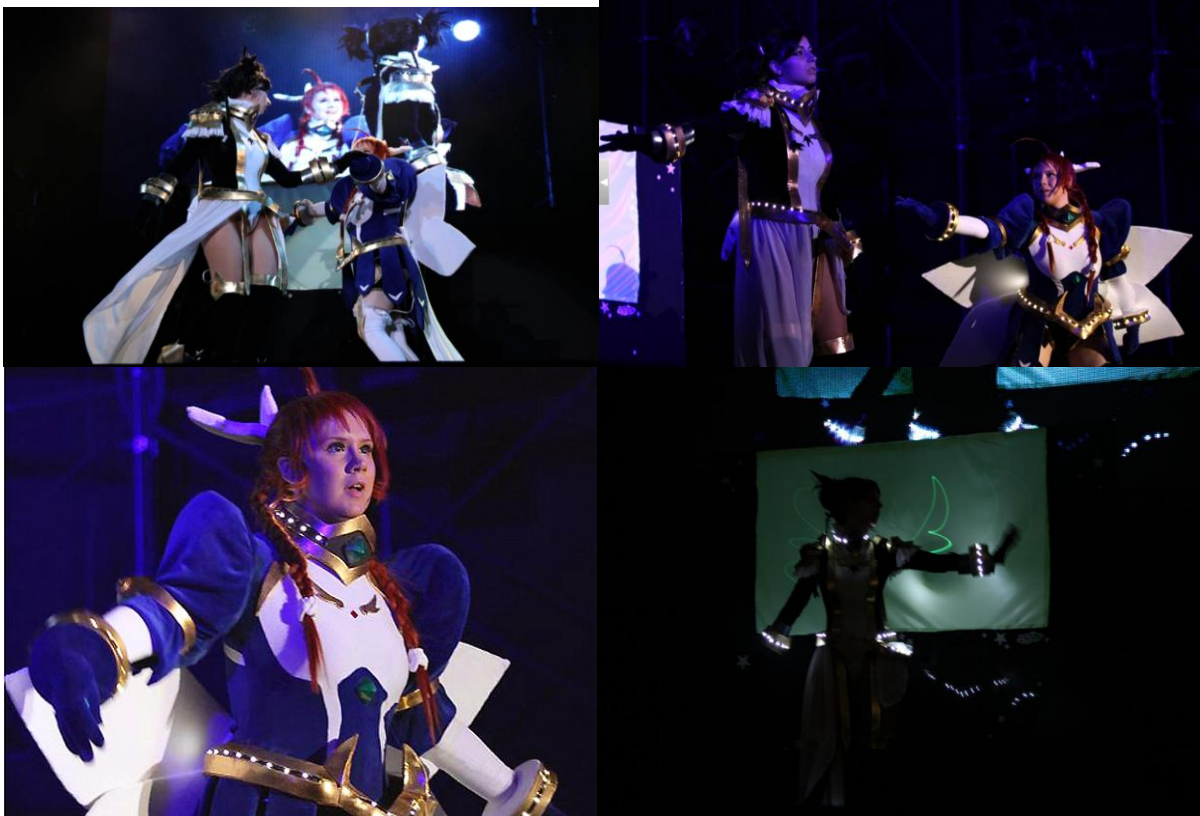
All the teams gathered together at Oasis 21 for the final rehearsals on stage. We rehearsed the award ceremony and the ending ceremony and after that our skit once again.

After everything we went back to the hotel for the last preparations for the “finals”.

Diana and I prepared ourselves and were going to Oasis 21 again for the big show.

The atmosphere backstage was really good, you should expect that all the teams should be very competitive, but it seemed that nobody gave something about it and were just having fun backstage. There was a screen where we could watch each performance and at the end of each performance everyone was yelling and cheering like crazy for each team.

Also after our performance, which didn't go well, it wasn't smooth and in sync because we had no time to make a decent skit, but still we got a good feedback and we heard that a lot of people were happy that we came with something new, with lights in our costumes and a special screen that lights up. It was a big relief to hear that, because Diana and I were so unsure about our performance since everything was rushed together, unfinished and roughly made and a big part of our performance was improvised.



Our stage performance

Then the award ceremony started and for Diana and me the most epic moment of the WCS.

They announced the winners for the “Cyperous Award” which is for the best wig, when they said; “Entry number 8” we where like; “Impossible! They are making a mistake!” And then they said our country name and Diana and I started laughing with tears in our eyes because we couldn’t believe we won something. I mean the most cosplayers are working for MONTHS on their project for the WCS and due circumstances Diana and I just got a week to make something for the finals, so everything was far from perfect!

So we couldn’t stop laughing, accepted our award and full unbelief and not realizing what happened we did go back to our place to finish the award ceremony.



Baby you're a firework!

The “Brother Award” for best costume was for Australia.

The 3rd place, China

The 2nd place, Italy

And the Grand champion, Brazil.

Congratulations to all of you guys, you guys deserve these awards more then Diana and I do because we can not believe we had the best wigs. For us it felt more like; “Guys, you were a fun team who enjoyed the WCS a lot and were a great help to make the WCS a success, you have done a good job in just a week so here an award”.

At the end there was a big party, and nobody talked about the results and acted like nothing happened, because we are the ones who have stand on the world cosplay stage so we are all winners!



Our epic reaction after we heard we won an award

Conclusion

The WCS is sure an “one of a kind” event and I am happy they are giving foreign cosplayers the chance to go to Japan to show there their passion and love for the Japanese culture. That is also were the WCS is about, it is not about getting a high ranking or winning awards, but it is about promoting Japanese pop culture as someone from a different country and being a bridge between your country and Japan.

I am a bit disappointed that the most people see the event one stage as the most important thing of the WCS, I mean those 2:30 minutes are just 2:30 minutes! And the cosplayers representing their country are not automatically the best of their country, they are good, everyone participating in the WCS is good and takes good care of their costumes and characters they are portraying. Everyone participating in the WCS are winners and got the chance to show their passion on the world cosplay stage with over 150.000 people in the audience and live broadcasting on television which is the most awesome thing ever!

We heard from the organizers that this was the very first time in the WCS history that all the teams acted as one big group and that is exactly what we are; TEAM WORLD!
We are all gathered there from all over the world to show our passion, TOGETHER.

I (and also Diana) have learned a lot from it.

Maybe for both of us it was a good thing we just got a week to prepare something.

Of course we both felt horrible about the fact we should be the worst prepared team ever participating but we both are in training for becoming professional costume designers, if we fail to make something in an extremely short time in the professional world we can loose our career.

So thank you WCS for giving us this experience!



Still can't believe we won something