

## The Pursuit of Happiness

Fetishists come in different shapes and sizes. Occasionally, they also come in a different species. Literally. This is something I found out when researching my latest comedy show 'Pet Project'. The show itself started as an innocent exploration of mankind's obsession with animals. Then I stumbled across the fascinating world of "the furies".

Broadly speaking, the furies are a group of people who feel a special affinity with animals and who will identify with a specific creature whose characteristics they see in themselves. Co-incidentally, these tend to be particularly cool animals such as foxes, wolves and dragons – not many furies tend to identify with woodlice.

There are sections of the furry community that are even more curious however. For example some of them like to dress up in full animal costumes (called fursuits) and hang out with other be-suited people like some freakish homage to Beatrix Potter. But by far the most intriguing of these subcultures, is the one to whom dressing as an animal is something sexual. This is the world of the furvert.

Furverts are basically furies that take part in "yiffing". Although this might sound like a Norwegian sport, it actually involves two people dressing up in fursuits and having sex – something that is taking the concept of heavy petting way too literally for some people's liking.

Although furverts represent only a small minority of the furry community, they're clearly the most intriguing facet - not only because their desires are so unusual, but also because their behaviour raises a number of issues on a practical level. Doesn't it get uncomfortably hot inside the fursuit? Can they actually see what they're doing? And how the hell does that work logistically? For the record, the answer to those questions are: Yes it does; it's probably best if they can't and; via a series of modified flaps and protrusions.

To be honest, my knowledge of yiffing is not first hand and has only been gleaned from reading forums and looking at some quite disturbing images on the internet. Although I like to be scrupulous in my research, I tend to draw the line at being shunted by a squirrel just for the sake of journalistic integrity.

What I can tell you however, is that to partake in yiffing, you need to buy a specially modified fursuit. These are very different to the types of animal costume you'll see at Disneyland - I'm guessing that you've never seen Mickey Mouse with a hole in his rear and his penis protruding from a sheath in front of him, as I'm fairly sure that's not acceptable, even at EuroDisney.

From what I can gather, once two consenting furverts get together and are appropriately suited up, one of them will bend over revealing the hole in the rear of their suit. The mating display really is no more subtle than that. Upon seeing this, the other furvert will grab on, slide in and presumably just go at it like a rabbit. Or a vole. Or whatever else happens to inspire them.

Now, although you may well be questioning the furverts' methods at this point, you surely can't question their commitment. I mean it can't be easy can it? For starters, it must be a nightmare getting otter spooage out of synthetic fur – at the very least you've got some explaining to do to at the dry cleaners. And can you imagine how hard it is to come out as a furry? Coming out as gay is difficult enough, but at least people have a frame of reference for that without having to enquire into the specifics. How do you break it to your parents that you're a furry? "Mum... Dad... I'm a stoat!" You can't just leave it there – it's likely there'll be subsequent questions.

That's why I think that far from being ridiculed or condemned by society for their foibles, the furverts should be applauded. Not only for the unparalleled dedication they show in their pursuit of sexual gratification, but also because theirs is one of the most inclusive of all the fetishes. As soon as you are wearing a fursuit, physical appearance is irrelevant. It doesn't matter whether you are ugly or beautiful, fat or thin, black or white. Nor is it important which god you call out to in the throes of ecstasy (though it's an interesting ethical dilemma as to whether a Jewish furry would do someone wearing a pig costume). In fact furverts are so inclusive that not even species is important - wolf or fox, rabbit or polar bear, hedgehog or owl – it doesn't matter. As long as you have a flap and a protrusion it's game on, though it does help if you have an appreciation for doggy style.

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