

Long Covid

Erdbok's thoughts on the 2022 South-Afrifur Convention



The Zeitgeist was markedly different mid [2019](#) when the local furry community started looking forward to their next annual get-together. Compared to [Camp Feral](#) in some quarters, the recipe was just about perfected back in [2017](#). An intimate, all-inclusive convention where the emphasis is on community and group activities. [South-Afrifur](#) is the brainchild of the visionary that was Ivic Wulfe that saw the first *proper* furry convention held on the African continent. Three years strong and going from strength to strength. But, of course, 2020 happened. And the fandom wasn't spared.

The organizers did the sensible thing and postponed the in-person meet not once, but twice, so that the pandemic could run its course. So profound was the isolating effects of the lock-down that an online only local convention [Fursaverance](#) saw its debut. There were cries of jubilation when it was announced that South-Afrifur would return in 2022. Covid would not be the end of the troubles, though. In May 2022 - just as the convention organizers went all-hands-on-deck - news came that [Ivic Wulfe passed away](#).

Forward to the 8th of July 2022. My thoughts as we departed for the venue were that - if nothing else - the gathering would have to be held in Ivic's honour to be considered a success.

Because of a scheduling conflict on the part of the venue, the convention had to be moved from [Ekudeni](#) to [Valverde, which is not very far away](#). The venues both offer very similar facilities; they are village-style resorts often seen in the greater Gauteng Province. They provide accommodation, some restaurants, a chapel (as they are mainly used for weddings) and conference facilities. The main difference being that Ekudeni offered more in terms of wildlife and overall felt further away from civilization.

By Friday evening the resort had filled with fluffy ears and swaying tails from near and far. The number of attendees this time round were fifty-seven souls. There was a total of eighteen fursuiters. After the welcome speech by Yukon (new South-Afrifur chairman), we all settled in for dinner and had the evening to socialize and catch-up. There were many new faces; those of furries who had their awakening during Covid and had never actually had the opportunity to meet outside of Telegram and VRChat. For those



who didn't simply want to chill and soak up the relaxed atmosphere, a movie about a dashing band of criminals lead by a Wolf was screened in the Rose Hall.

The serious work got underway on Saturday, which was primarily filled with activities in and around the Artist Alley. Everything from fursuiting props to t-shirts to home-baked ginger cookies were on sale. Creators and admirers mingled. Deals for future fursuit commissions were clinched.



My impression is that sales overall were not as strong as in previous conventions. This was expected; in no small part due to the struggling economy. One item that did out-sell expectations, however, were raffle tickets. ALL the raffle tickets were sold! Along with proceeds from charitable sales and other donations, an estimated ZAR22000 (approximately \$1300) was raised for the three charities supported by the convention. The charities being [Jugomaro Predator Park](#), [Cheetah Experience](#) and [PACT](#).

For the first time since its inception, South-Afrifur held a fursuit dance competition. There were four acts - all dances. Metalus the Dragon was crowned the overall winner. The music continued after dinner. Building on the success at the previous convention, there was a free-for-all furry rave. The DJ (as before) was Furnixwolf. He not only provided the music, but also all the sound equipment, lights, lasers and smoke machines.

On Sunday we held our scavenger hunt. And panels. There were only two panels this year - one on streaming and one on fursuit making. These were followed by photo sessions and fursuit games. The Snow Leopard Shiro was crowned the overall winner. The last point of order was the prize-giving and the raffle draw.

The time had come to say good bye. There were long deep hugs and solemn words of good bye. There were assurances that we would see again, but the memory of the last time those words were said hung like the pervasive morning cold. The parking lot emptied out. Organizers and volunteers started taking down posters and packing all the equipment. Participants took to social media, sharing pictures and good memories. Friends lists bulged with new connections made as the realization dawned - it was all over. The mundane world awaited us.

But what about Ivic? Watching solemnly from the corner of the hall the entire time, a framed portrait of his fursona, his human form and an obituary. A green candle flickered away as the events of the weekend unfolded. He dwelt there in spirit and I am sure if he could speak to us from the afterlife, he would say "Well done guys, you make me proud."

Is it a tightness in my chest? Or is it perhaps the afterglow of one of his spine-snapping hugs I last felt from three years ago? South-Afrifur convention 2022, if nothing else, was a reminder to cherish our friends whilst they are still with us. Never pass on an opportunity to say something nice. To give a hug. To share something from the heart. The world we live in is harsh and uncertain. Hold no regrets. As with Long Covid, we will always be haunted by the unfortunate things that have come across our path. Fading, but never vanishing completely. Let good memories balm our wounds; the good ones can last a lifetime, too.

