

# Lights, Camera, Crochet!

Allison Hoffman's celebrity amigurumi is ready for its close-up.

BY LEEANNE JONES

Lee character Sue Sylvester is best known for sabotage, conspiracy, and blackmail. But who knew the glee club's nemesis is also a fan of amigurumi? Sitting on a shelf in Sue's office, propped up against a trophy, is a miniature crocheted version of the cheer coach—red tracksuit, bullhorn at the ready, and a smirk on her face.

"Every episode, we look for it," says Allison Hoffman, the toy's creator, who's been watching the hit Fox show very closely since she heard her doll was given to a set decorator. "This week, they showed



Pee-wee Herman and Chairy



Allison Hoffman and her Conan O'Brien doll



Glee's Sue Sylvester



Dolls inspired by *Where the Wild Things Are*

Sue's office, but didn't pan over to it!"

Seeing her work on national television is a thrill, but it wasn't Allison's first brush with celebrity. In fact, celebrities are kind of her thing. It all started when the 34-year-old

Austin, Texas mom couldn't find *Yo Gabba Gabba!* toys for her three young boys and decided to create her own Japanese-style crochet dolls. "I made a basic pattern, writing it down as I went. And then people started asking for them," she says.

So she started a website, *Crafty Is Cool*, in 2007, and began selling amigurumi patterns—from penguins and clowns to PBS painter Bob Ross and the characters of *Where the Wild Things Are*—and soliciting custom orders. In January 2010, when Conan O'Brien left *The Tonight Show*, Allison's husband suggested she make a Conan doll. She posted a photo to the I'm With Coco Facebook page, and after the administrators asked her to donate a doll for a giveaway, it went viral—popping up on blogs from *Entertainment Weekly* to Perez Hilton. "All of a sudden, I had so many emails," says Allison. "It was exciting."

She ultimately met Conan, and went on to share the stage with Paul Reubens (Pee-wee Herman) at

South by Southwest and hang out with the now-grown cast of *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* at Austin's Comic Con. In December, Martha Stewart invited Allison to her TV show and gushed over the amigurumi likeness of herself and her beloved chow chow, Genghis Khan.

While the dolls are remarkably detailed, the work is all single crochet stitching. "It's basic and anyone can do it," Allison says. "I also like to play with the yarn: I unravel it for hair and brush it to make it fluffy." She prefers using acrylic yarn because it has more structure and is available in many colors, although she's always on the hunt for good skin tones.

Allison shares her expertise as an instructor at The Knitting Nest in Austin and is currently working on her first book on making amigurumi people, due out in Fall 2013 from Lark Crafts. "Being able to show people something new and fun is rewarding," she says. "For the rest of their lives, they can go and create. 🌀"

PHOTO OF ALLISON BY AMANDA KLAUS; ALL OTHER PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ALLISON HOFFMAN