**Interview with CeCe Drake**

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Interviewer: Alright, when did you first hear about drag?

CeCe Drake: Drag was something that I heard about very young because there’s actors, like, the original Ursula in Little Mermaid is played by a man and I was always very involved in theater, so I heard about drag very early on. But I never really understood it. So from a Broadway standpoint, I never really looked at it as crossdressing and I never really like to call myself a crossdresser because I think, I don’t know, it can be deceiving and I definitely didn't understand it when I was younger, I thought it was really weird if it wasn’t in, like, a Broadway production or in a movie.

Interviewer: So, your initial reaction, you thought it was weird outside of Broadway?

CeCe Drake: Yeah, I thought it was weird outside of a performing standpoint. So, like, if I wasn’t watching a show, so, if I knew that drag was a thing in bars and, like, people actually performed on TV or just did it for the fun of it I thought it was weird. I didn’t understand it. I didn’t understand why a guy, outside of like, wanting to make money and be in a movie would want to be dressed up as a woman. So, I thought it was really strange. And I had that mindset for the longest time. I always said that I didn’t understand why men wanted to be drag queens. Even when I first came out, and it wasn’t until I came out and went to my first gay pride that I actually totally understood, appreciated, I shouldn’t say understood, because I still didn’t understand it, but appreciated it. Because I’ve always dabbled in doing hair and makeup on females, and the first time I saw a drag queen, and a professional drag queen in person was at my first gay pride event, it was in Chicago, and I was like “Oh my god! She’s stunning!” and I kind of got more appreciation for it, because that’s a lot of artwork, in my opinion, that goes towards it.

Interviewer: Yeah, that totally makes sense, I totally agree, it’s not until you actually see it in person. So, your first time actually seeing it was in Chicago?

CeCe Drake: Yeah, my first time seeing it and experiencing drag was in Chicago, I went with a friend of mine and her and I went to the parade and it was a really exhilarating thing, event, for many reasons, but to witness, the parade had started and the floats were going by, and it was a Hamburger Mary’s float which is a drag restaurant/bar…

Interviewer: Yeah, I just went there a couple weeks ago!

CeCe Drake: Yeah, it’s super cool! That was where, the parade was, I think, for all ages, but it was a Hamburger Mary’s float and the queens just like, one had their crown on, I have always been obsessed with pageantry and just seeing all of this made me want to investigate more and learn more. At this point I had never watched RuPaul’s Drag Race, and I had never really paid attention, again, up until, outside of theatre, of what drag was. So, after this parade I was walking around, and I was meeting drag queens and it was a super cool moment because I got to ask them how long it took them to do their makeup and some of the different steps. Even then, I still didn’t have a good understanding, but I had a big appreciation for it, I mean, how cool, and I always love to see the side by sides of what they look like as males and as a female impersonator.

Interviewer: Oh, me too! It is amazing

CeCe Drake: Just mind boggling, just blows me out of the water! So, I definitely had a really good appreciation for it. I still didn’t really understand, like, why they would want to do it, because at the time as myself I was like “Oh, I’ll never be a drag queen” but I was like, “I think it’s super cool.”

Interviewer: So, when did you know you wanted to do drag, like, when was the moment you said, okay I am going to try this.

CeCe Drake: So, the very first time I knew I wanted to do drag was actually, um, our local college had put on the production of “The Little Mermaid” and the role of Ursula was originally wrote for a man. And I was like “I want to do this, I was to portray Ursula” so I actually auditioned, which, I had done multiple productions out there in years past, I had done like seven leading up to Little Mermaid, no actually that was, yeah seven. So, like, I was convinced that I wanted to do the role, so I got into drag. And it’s not normal drag, you know, I was purple, and I had this costume on with tentacles on the dress, but I got into drag and it was actually very empowering. Every audition I had ever done for a show, I was super nervous, and it’s weird because I’m not nervous when I’m doing a show, but when I audition for a show, super nervous. But auditioning dressed up as Ursula which is something no one really usually does, was so empowering and it took my nerves away I was kind of, it gives me the opportunity to get into a different mindset and really embody the character. So that was the first time I knew I wanted to do drag.

Interviewer: That’s amazing!

CeCe Drake: And I still kind of categorize it a little bit differently because when you do a show and you’re doing a character, um, a fictional character, I think it’s a little bit different, because when you are a drag queen you can create this alternate personality that you can kind of live out while you’re in drag. So, I still, at that point, like, “I still don’t necessarily want to be a drag queen, but I want to portray this female character, this female fictional character in the show” and so that was the first time I knew I wanted to do some type of female impersonation.

Interviewer: Okay!

CeCe Drake: My very first time I knew I wanted to be a drag queen, I was a male performer, so I performed, obviously as a male in drag bars and male reviews, and one of my best friends is a drag queen, her names Ben Dovah Plenti, and she does comedy.

Interviewer: I love that!

CeCe Drake: She is so funny, and she does characters, she does like Mary Katherine Gallagher from Superstar, Fembot from um, Austin Powers. So she does these fun characters and she was like “Let’s do this Turnabout show” where males do female impersonation and drag queens do males, so I’m like “Okay, I want to do it” like, I wanted to give it a chance to see what it was like for my fellow castmates were going through. So, I did it, and it was the most empowering thing. And I don’t know what it is about, you know, you put the heels on and the wig on, but you feel like you’re invincible and it’s such an exhilarating feeling and that was the first time I knew I wanted, from there on out, that I wanted to be a drag queen.

Interviewer: Oh, that is awesome! How old were you?

CeCe Drake: I was 22, no, 23 at the time. It kind of took me a while to really convince myself to, like, pursue it, because I was concerned of what other, what people would say. Not really my peers but my family. Cause one of my mom’s biggest concerns, when I came out, she was like “ Just promise me”, and I think that’s where, like, being uneducated comes from, is like, “Promise me you don’t want to be a woman”. And so I told her, “I don’t want to be trans, it’s not something that I’ve ever thought about.” And she was like “Well, you don’t want to dress up like a girl either, do you?” and I was like “No, it’s not ever really crossed my mind.” And so that was kind of a fear, that she would think that I would want to be a woman. And that was, you know, her and I were both still learning at that phase. I hadn’t ever experienced, really, gay culture.

Interviewer: Especially where we’re from, it’s very hard.

CeCe Drake: Yes. Especially in a small town, it was really culture shocking when finally I experienced, like, I had friends from Indy, and I went to Indy, and like they took me to all the gay bars, and they took me all around. I had never been to a gay bar, and they took me all around the city and to all their gay establishments, and it was very eye-opening, and I got a better understanding for gay culture, and sort of, like, the trans-community. And so, once I was exposed to that I was able to slowly expose my parents to that. When I competed for Mr. Gay Evansville I was able to have my parents there to watch me and there were drag queens in the room and they were able to meet them, and kind of talk to them. Like my dad even took a picture with them, and that was the craziest moment because I thought he would be so uncomfortable, and he was like “No, I thought they were real girls.” So they got a better understanding for it. So, when I do drag now it’s a little more understood by her because she knows I am performing and portraying a different character and it’s not something I want to live out as a full-time fantasy.

Interviewer: Right, so why do you continue to do drag? Kind of, like, what still motivates you to do drag? Why do you continue to do it?

CeCe Drake: When I’m in drag, like, each time, I can step into, like, I can leave the stress of, like, my day to day job and my “boy life” per say and be the person who doesn’t have the worries of their car payment, and all these other things and I can be CeCe for the night, and not worry about my boy life. It’s a relief and it’s an opportunity to perform, because there’s not tons of opportunity around where we live, or where I live, to perform except maybe like two times a year and it’s that outlet to be creative and get to do things I don’t get to do on a day to day basis.

Interviewer: That totally makes sense.

CeCe Drake: And growing up I always loved having Barbies and it wasn’t because I liked playing with them, they were the most boring toy to play with. It was because I could dress them up and do their hair, and I liked to do that, and I could put them up and look at them. And so like, that is what I can do to myself now as a drag queen. So, when I’m getting ready and putting my make up on, I can make my face how I would want my Barbies to look. I can do my makeup however I want to do it, and then when I put my pads on it gives me my curves, and I get to pick out the frilliest dress and the blondest wig I can find and the tallest heels and it gives you an opportunity to kind of live out childhood-like curiosity. Because, I guess not curious, though, as a child I wasn’t curious, but, infatuation, because I was infatuated with the glamourous part of Barbie dolls, and when I grew up, I’m doing hair and makeup now. So like, doing it myself, I can do it to the extreme in drag.

Interviewer: Right. Exactly what you want and looking in the mirror sort of thing. Like fulfilling to see you as that?

CeCe Drake: It is! So like, once you are fully dressed, for me, it becomes real when I put the wig on. The wig kind of brings the whole look together, and its liberating because you’re that character for the night. So, my drag name is CeCe Drake, and kind of what I aspire to look like in drag. I always try to do blonde hair because I think it looks more flattering on me in drag, surprisingly even though I’m a natural brunette boy. But she is glamourous, kind of a Barbie, I always try to do pink lips and pink eyeshadows, and very pink blushy cheeks. Very feminine. I’m kind of a feminine male, but not as much as CeCe is. CeCe is girly, the pink dresses, and pink shoes, and the high heel stilettos, I never wear flats when I’m dressed up as CeCe because I think it’s tacky and she is glamorous and has to exude glamour and elegance. And, like, I got my name from a friend of mine, she was a good friend of mine and her name is CeCe, Celia is her name, but she goes by CeCe, she was a hairdresser. I just love the way she carries herself, she is so confident and she, I just think, is very elegant. Just in how she- how her demeanor is. I wanted to kind of be like her while being very feminine and Barbie like, so I took CeCe which is also a character from one of my favorite shows, which is Pretty Little Liars, her name was CeCe Drake, so I took that last name and I took the name of one of my best friends and just put them together. That’s where I found my stage name and you can give yourself any name you want but it is how you characterize her, how you leave an impression on people is how they perceive her.

Interviewer: Right. So, has that, doing drag, helped your confidence in your real life, like your day-to-day life? Like, after putting on drag performances, do you feel more confident?

CeCe Drake: Yeah, I would definitely say it does help you exude more confidence, but when you’re dressed as your female impersonation, like when you’re being a female impersonator, and you’re dressed as a character, you don’t have the insecurities that come with being a boy. When I am dressed as CeCe, I have a waist cincher on, and my hip pads, and my butt pads, and I’m curvy and more slim. But as a boy I don’t have a waist cincher and have no butt. And, um, and I don’t have big hips. So, there’s more insecurity of the physical look because you’re not as put together. It gives me the confidence, speaking wise yes, being a drag queen, you can be on the mic, you’re onstage, you’re in front of a crowd. I have performed in front of 150 people as a drag queen before

Interviewer: Wow

CeCe Drake: Which is kind of a smaller audience for drag, but, I mean, it’s exhilarating and gives you stage presence, and so it definitely has helped me with my stage presence and my communication skills. But it also, so when I am in front of people as a boy I can kind of go into that mindset that I am that empowered person like CeCe is. Because when I’m dressed as CeCe there’s no stopping her, she’s empowering, and she is a force to be reckoned with and people aren’t going to overshadow what she has to say. And so sometimes you have to kind of find that mindset, while remembering you’re not wearing heels and a wig, and you’re not going to stand out as much, so you have to be a little more vocal and that kind of helps with the speaking aspect of the day to day. That’s what’s nice about drag, is, even though you have insecurities as a boy, those insecurities can go away when you’re in drag because you don’t have to be that person.

Interviewer: Yeah, so for you it’s like, because I would imagine, for me, if I were to have an onstage persona, like, that’s me too. You know? I’m still that person up there, so in my everyday life I can still be a force to be reckoned with and still be confident.

CeCe Drake: Yes. For sure. And I catch myself sometimes, I’m like, so CeCe can be really sassy and be outspoken, and so I catch myself sometimes. I would like to say that I am an outspoken person in general, but I catch myself holding back things that I know I probably shouldn’t say in certain settings, but then there’s times that I become passionate about something, and that’s where I can say that CeCe kicks in and I’m becoming more vocal, and very loud about it and I have to remind myself like “Okay, you have to remain calm.” In drag you can be as passionate as you want and no one’s going to be like “Well she was being too loud and vocal.” they’re going to be like “Speak the truth!” like, there’s no, you’re not expected to have a filter in drag. Whereas in your day to day life you have to have a filter.

Interviewer: So, would you say your drag is like, more pageant queen or like glamour? How would you, what labels would you use to describe your drag?

CeCe Drake: I would definitely describe my drag aesthetic as glamour and pageant because that is where I find a lot of inspiration. I don’t know if you follow any female impersonation pageant systems. I don’t necessarily want to perform every weekend, because it’s exhausting. But I want to be a pageant queen like I would love to represent systems as a pageant girl. I don’t want to discredit performing queens who don’t do pageants, because they are what stemmed pageants and performing. I love to perform but my passion is behind a system and winning the crown. Because it gives you, also, another platform to stand on and use drag and use that system as a platform to speak about things that are important, Especially the LGBT community.

Interviewer: Yeah, because you have more people listening, kind of thing?

CeCe Drake: Yeah, definitely. There’s a glamourous part about winning the crown and wearing the dresses, and that has infatuated me even more. So, when I follow the continental system it is primarily trans women but there are still female impersonators in the mix. The US of A system and the Miss Gay America system is primarily male impersonators, and so there is a glamourous aspect to it that intrigued me and kept me interested and pushed me to do it. Because, being in male pageantry has always been fun and I love the fact that I have won, I think I have won 7 titles now.

Interviewer: Wow, that’s amazing!

CeCe Drake: Out of the 9 pageants that I competed in and I always, I coach girls for county fair and for like glam pageants and I always was interested in and thought I could do it myself. When I teach girls how-to walk-in heels, I bring my heels and I walk with them. And I think I can do that, so I am actually competing in my first pageant this summer as a female impersonator.

Interviewer: That’s so exciting!

CeCe Drake: I am excited, I am nervous but excited.

Interviewer: Oh, you’ll do great, you’ll do great. You’ve been walking in heels, you’re good, that’s the biggest part.

CeCe Drake: It really is the biggest part.

Interviewer: The stage presence, it’s a huge deal.

CeCe Drake: It is, if you don’t have stage presence you’re not noticed.

Interviewer: Right, one hundred percent. So, is there a drag artist that you look up to the most, is there one that you aspire to be like?

CeCe Drake: There is a couple, and for different reasons, one that I want to be like would have to be Ben Dovah. Because she, well, a lot of queens won’t just donate their time, they want their booking fee. And she will go to the show after working a 13-hour day and drive 3 hours to be there for free just, so she can help an organization or charity. So, definitely Ben is someone, Ben Dovah is someone who I aspire to be like, full-time drag. For looks, I don’t know if you have heard of Alyssa Edwards, she is a Ru girl.

Interviewer: Oh yes, I love her.

CeCe Drake: She is stunning, I think. She is a former Miss America who was stripped of her title, but she is a pageant queen and I think she is absolutely beautiful. So aesthetic wise, I would definitely say Alyssa Edwards with a little bit of Trixie in there because Trixie has a lot of the Barbie aspect that I like but more of the female look that Alyssa has.

Interviewer: Right, that’s awesome. So have they influenced your drag? Or how you perform in any way?

CeCe Drake: You cut out there.

Interviewer: Oh, sorry. I said, have those three drag queens influenced your drag in different ways like with looks or with your appearance and stage presence, like, have those three helped you at all? Have you taken anything from them?

CeCe Drake: Oh, most definitely, so like I learned a lot physically from Ben, painting wise, he taught me how to do my makeup, more so. Stage presence I have learned a lot from Alyssa because Alyssa is very prominent on stage. So, when I watch her, there are things she does to be more noticed, and sometimes you must step on some toes. Which isn’t, like, in my boy life I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t usually step on people who, like get the attention but, sometimes, in drag you have to in order to be noticed. But I think sometimes it can come off the wrong way and I never want to come off rude, and I think she can come off rude. That is something I don’t want to take from her, but I want her confidence on stage. And like, Trixie, she does a lot of comedy and I think that is something I need to incorporate into mine. Because I find myself pretty humorous as a boy, but when I’m in drag I am more serious and reserved at times. I think I lose the comedy aspect, which, I think, a lot of drag should have. Because if you’re not entertaining and funny, people aren’t always going to watch. Looks go only so far, if you are boring on stage, they’re not going to watch too much longer.

Interviewer: Right. As far as performance clothes, do you make them, or do you buy them?

CeCe Drake: A lot of my costumes I buy. I can sew, and I am decent at it, but I don’t have the extra time, personally, to make my own costumes. I do style some of my own wigs, like I’ll buy a wig that’s not curly and I’ll tease it and curl it and pin it up, or I’ll just sew it in a bun. But costume wise, I definitely like to buy. And it’s fun because there’s all these struggling queens who are trying to make a name for themselves who are so talented with sewing and so good at it, and it’s like supporting a local business and supporting another drag queen and I think that is important. So I always try to, costume wise, I try to buy from them. But listen, it is not cheap.

Interviewer: No, that is one question we have, like how expensive it is, if you are comfortable with me asking that?

CeCe Drake: Oh, for sure, that is one thing that everyone should know because it’s sometimes underappreciated and that is where some queens are like, listen, I am bringing a $300 dress that I just bought with $400 worth of stones on it to your benefit show. So, I think that goes hand and hand with what people expect of a drag queen. They don’t realize that, sometimes its tacky and gaudy and sometimes it can come off cheap, when it is not cheap. My most expensive thing that I have is probably $300 and it is a dress, um, but my most expensive piece I am currently investing in is a pageant gown and I think at the end, after everything is said and done, it is going to cost me about $700 which is pretty cheap compared to some of the things my friends have. I know Ben Dovah’s Miss Gay Indiana pageant gown, she rented and she paid like, $600 for, just to rent it. And so, hair and oh my gosh, hairs outrageously expensive but you need good hair. And so, most expensive wig I have is $150 and that wasn’t like, it doesn’t have a lot of body, it’s just a curled wig but its lace front and so it’s more expensive but it looks natural so like when I put it on you can’t see my hairline or if you can see hairline it just blends in with my skin. It’s not cheap and that’s why, like, starting out you have to go to open stages and stuff to do these things where you’re not getting paid to be there but you’re making tips and hope that people are going to recognize the talent you are bringing to the stage. And so, I’ve been fortunate I started out as a boy performer and I knew people who opened a little bit of doors for me, so I didn’t have to go to open stages, and they know I am entertaining, so they know I am going to bring something to the stage, but they just need to see a polished look. You just have to practice, and so, practicing takes product, and product takes money, so you have to fund yourself a lot of the time with your boy jobs which is not the easiest thing to do when you have other obligations. Luckily, I have a lot of friends who were willing to give me things to help me get started. And that’s always the best thing too, some of my pieces that I have and appreciate the most were given to me by another queen because they want to see you exceed and excel in the industry.

Interviewer: That is so awesome, so this is just a question that I have, we watched Season 7, maybe 8, no, Season 9 of RuPaul and the queens are so uplifting with each other and I know that something I have noticed in previous seasons that it isn’t as common. So, for you, has the drag community been very accepting or lifting up? Have you had kind of a sisterhood? Have you had any negative experiences with it?

CeCe Drake: I’ve definitely experienced a sisterhood for CeCe. People reached out after my very first performance as CeCe and were so encouraging. I think I did experience some negative, from some other queens, who were, I don’t want to say they were calling her ugly, but in other words they were saying she wasn’t ready. But I had more of an outpour of positive and that didn’t even give me the time to think about the negative, because there was such a good outpour of positivity. I am fortunate enough, in the drag community you can have drag families. I have a drag mother, well, two technically Ben Dovah was my, she was my Miss Gay Evansville, so we had that relationship there, but she put me in drag the very first time and she as kind of like, so she is one of my drag mothers, and Tia Mirage Hall, she is an Indy queen, she is a trans woman, but she’s been performing as drag queen for years and years, and she took me under her wing. She’s given me guidance and she’s loaning me a pageant dress, she is such a great person to have in your corner. And when you sit back and watch other queens tear each other down, that is something I never want to be a part of because at the end of the day that is someone’s art that they are putting out for the world to see. Yes, they might not be as polished as the girl standing next to them or they might not be able to dance as good as the person behind them, but they’re still doing something that they feel passionate about and who am I to say “Ew. What you just spent three hours on is trash.” I would rather say “Hey, let me give you some tips on a way to blend out your make up a little bit better, or here is a product I use, you can have this, this is where you I get it.” I’ve done that before, even just as a male performer, like “Oh, you don’t have pants? Well here’s a pair of my pants” or “Here’s a pair of my shoes.” I totally understand the struggle, the financial struggle, I understand time restraints, I didn’t have time to run home and get all my costume pieces one time, and I got to the show and I forgot my bow tie and I forgot my cuff links for this pageant, and one of my brothers was like here’s my cuff links, use my bow tie for crowning, you go ahead and use it. And I’ve experienced that with drag, one of my heels clasps broke and I couldn’t buckle it and I don’t like wearing the same thing on stage more than once, and this other queen, Vivika Darko was like “Come and raid my closet”, so I went to her dressing room and went through her closet, she let me borrow heels. It’s always an uplifting experience and I don’t think I’ve ever experienced a negative performance before. Where someone in the dressing room was just like, “Ew. No.” to me. I’ve witnessed it, and it’s just heartbreaking to witness, because you don’t want to see someone put someone else down, but that, I guess, is part of the industry too. And I will voice my opinion, but I’ll never want to hurt someone’s feelings. And that’s inevitable. My opinion is going to hurt someone’s feelings, and things will get heated, but I will always try to remind myself, like, I don’t want to be in their shoes, first, you know?

Interviewer: Right! So, like throwing shade and jokes is such a big part of drag from what I’ve seen in class. But it’s kind of like, poking fun at each other. That kind of thing, but never really wanting to make it negative and hurt people’s feelings.

CeCe Drake: And, like throwing shade in the dressing room is totally okay and spilling the tea, like, “Girl you look a little rough, like, let me help you with that lipstick, here’s a lip liner. Line those lips because they look busted.” but you can do it in a joking manner and then there’s like, not trying to help them and putting them down and tell them “You look like crap” and so I think there’s always that way, and, I hope that if I ever make something of myself in drag that I always remain more of a positive person and to give positive feedback more than a negative feedback. And I hope I can always help critique people in a positive way more so, and not in a negative way.

Interviewer: Right, and I think that you are aware of it and have a general understanding of it, so I think you’ll be fine.

CeCe Drake: Well, I think sometimes queens come into the industry and they don’t care about the people around they don’t care if they see other people succeed as long as they succeed. And they will do whatever it takes to hurt the other person next to them if it means them winning. And I can’t really remember. Season 9, do you remember who the girls were in Season 9?

Interviewer: It’s like, Sasha Velour, Shea Couleé

CeCe Drake: Okay, yeah, those girls were really uplifting and helpful. And I think Season 10 was, I don’t know if you watched Season 10, it has Blair St. Clair in it and Blair St. Clair is an Indianapolis queen. She was Miss Gay Indiana the year I competed for Mr. Gay Indiana, Ben Dovah was first runner up to Blair St. Clair for Miss Gay Indiana. So, I know Blair from before Drag Race. I don’t know her more on a personal level, but one of my ex-boyfriends was best friends with Blair so I kind of knew Blair in passing and through charity events, and Blair was at my step-down as Mr. Gay Evansville. So, I kind of got to know Blair then but Blair also went through a lot of life changes from the Blair I knew, so when Blair was Miss Gay Indiana she got a DUI. And when she went to film RuPaul’s Drag Race, someone leaked that she was actually not supposed to leave the state and that she had currently received a DUI. And that was a queen from Indy, that is a part of the industry where people get jealous, I see, when people excel, they get jealous, and jealousy fuels it a lot. So, like when queens win challenges in RuPaul, which a lot of it is edited to look more malicious than it is. So, that’s why I always encourage, so like, one thing I definitely t encourage is, if your other classmates don’t do it, is go to a real drag show and watch the real queens, well I shouldn’t say real because they’re still real queens, but watch the local queens and get a better understanding from the performing aspect. Because, at the end of the day it’s still reality TV and some of it is scripted and some of it is cut and edited to make it seem worse than it is. On the current season I know Silky Ganache. She’s from Indy originally and she moved to Chicago, and so she was a queen I met in Indy, she was really uplifting when I was performing as a boy, and I was expressing to her that I want to be a queen. She was like “Do it, give it a go, fuck anyone who doesn’t want you to succeed as a queen. Or people who think it’s weird. Show them it’s not weird”. But on the show, they make her seem like this really star hungry queen who is obnoxious. She is an obnoxious person, I was watching live videos of Silky in Chicago and she climbed on a mail truck and rode down the road during her number on a mail truck, hanging off the side of it, and it was the best thing ever. She is a performer through and through. But sometimes the way they edit the film they make Silky out to be this like bitchy person and she is not really a bitchy queen. That’s one thing, like, why reality TV is scary. I have considered auditioning for RuPaul’s Drag Race, but it’s also, I don’t know if I want to have that negative light shedded on me because competition to make people, more,

Interviewer: Like true colors?

CeCe Drake: Yeah, but I also think it changes you a little and changes your true colors to be more negative. So, I don’t know. Like I was at a pageant as a boy I had, the guy next to me asked “Can I use your steamer?” and I was like “For sure!” it was my first big pageant in Evansville, and I was like “Yeah, go ahead!” and when I got my steamer back, it had an iron on it, he had melted plastic on it and said he didn’t do it on purpose, and I couldn’t use my steamer now. So I think things like that happen in drag, too. I know at a state pageant [inaudible] one year, this queen was about to go onstage and someone dumped a drink on her dress. Like, things happen like that, and I hope I am never on the receiving end of that and I know I will never be been on the giving end of that. I never want to be the person to ruin someone’s chances because I want that opportunity more than them and I never want to be the person who gets my chances ruined.

Interviewer: Right. So, like, how do you feel about RuPaul’s Drag Race? Just like, your opinion on it as a whole, as the show?

CeCe Drake: I love the show, personally. I don’t get to, get a chance to watch it unless I like, find it on the internet, because I don’t have cable. And they used to be on Hulu, but they don’t carry it anymore because it became very mainstream and they were not able to renew their contract with VH1 for it. But, I love the show, I think it gives America the opportunity to appreciate drag, but again I think it sometimes sheds a negative light on drag queens, and it makes them out to look like they’re lushes or they’re just drama filled. And that’s not always the case, some of the queens I’ve seen on RuPaul’s Drag Race have donated hundreds of their hours and have helped raise millions of dollars for different charities, children’s hospitals, AIDS funds. I mean, the work they’re doing isn’t always profitable for them, and so I don’t think RuPaul’s show shows a lot of that. And I hope that in future seasons it does show that queens are charitable. And I think it gives a good look though, on the process of, you know, becoming your female persona, and the performing aspect, but I also think it sheds a negative light, for the reality TV part.

Interviewer: Right, just to keep it interesting kind of thing?

CeCe Drake: Yes, and yeah, I totally get that. I was with a talent agent one time trying to do reality TV myself. So, I totally understand that you have to remain interesting and you have to do things to remain on screen to get your screen time. But also, I think sometimes the things you say and do, they can portray you to be dumb when you’re really smart and it’s just the way the TV has edited your words and what you said.

Interviewer: Right, so do you think drag is changing? What do you think the future of drag is in the next coming years?  Because I feel like America, like half of our country is getting more accepting, it may not feel like it sometimes, but just because of social media there’s a bigger platform for everybody. So what do you think the future of drag is?

CeCe Drake: I think the future of drag is forever changing. Um. I don’t know if you have ever watched Paris is Burning,

Interviewer: Yes, we had to watch it in class!

CeCe Drake: Okay great, I think that’s awesome that you guys watched it because it gives you a really good understanding of where drag came from.

Interviewer: Yes, I loved it.

CeCe Drake: And, um, I didn’t watch it until I was 24, maybe late 23. But I watched it, and it gave me a really good understanding of drag and male performing and where pageants originated, and it gave me really good respect for original queens who made it possible for me to be a drag queen today. I hope it doesn’t become so mainstream that it becomes underappreciated in the future and my fear is that’s where it’s heading. That it’s going to become such a household thing that it’s not as appreciated by the LGBT community anymore. Because I know, right now, that with the TV show, more heterosexual people are going to drag shows and it’s becoming more of a common thing, and I know that a lot of people have mixed feelings about that. And I don’t, I think if they’re coming to appreciate your performance, I just hope it doesn’t become a mockery in the future where it has become such a mainstream thing that people just make a joke of it.

Interviewer: Right, yeah, I hadn’t thought about that.

CeCe Drake: and people have always made a joke of drag, and I mean, obviously, hetero people who don’t understand drag are going to think it’s weird and they’re not going to understand it. And I was that person at one point but I hope it doesn’t become a joke because of reality TV, and that’s my fear, my fear is that RuPaul’s show is going to make a joke of drag, and it’s going to become a household, it’s such a household thing now, but it’s going to become underappreciated in the years to come because it’s so, because people can access it by TV now, whereas you had to go out and you had to support your local performers before or you couldn’t watch drag.

Interviewer: So how would you define drag to someone who didn’t know what drag was?

CeCe Drake: I would define it as an artistic performance, I think it takes someone who is talented to get into the makeup. You have to, create your craft and you have to perfect it, and I think that takes talent and creativity. At the end of the day it is a performance. You’re portraying something you can’t do, I mean unless you’re a full time drag queen, which I think is an awesome career, but for me from 8am to 3pm I’m working with the public as a boy, and sometimes from 11pm to 3am I’m working with the public as a queen. And I think I would describe drag as a performing outlet, and an art, it’s definitely an art.

Interviewer: Right. So how do you feel about cis gender and bioqueens?

CeCe Drake: I think it is all performance. I have no problem with bioqueens, I think they are just as important as female impersonators. I think they can give us tips as we can give them tips. Sometimes think there isn’t enough comradery between female impersonators and bioqueens. I think bioqueens, and I’m looking at it from a pageant standpoint, I do not think that bioqueens and female impersonators should ever be judged together. Because, bioqueens have more the female characteristic than female impersonators, and sometimes trans women, and I think that’s an unfair advantage in a pageant system. Generally, you don’t find bioqueens being judged next to a female impersonator. But sometimes the female impersonator has the upper hand because they can have the perfect hips and the perfect thigh and the perfect breast size, and have had silicone put into their cheeks, and, so it is just not a fair thing. But I think I respect them 100% as I would the next queen who is a man, just with makeup on. I think they are important just like I think drag kings are important females impersonating men, or males, are important.

Interviewer: Right. So, what do you think, I just have two more questions by the way, what do you think is the purpose of drag?

CeCe Drake: I think the purpose of drag is different for everybody. For me it is to embody a female character that I have created for myself, so I can have fun. For me it is more fun, and sometimes if I’m like, “Oh, I want to fund this for myself” and I need a little extra cash, I will book myself somewhere and do that, but it’s always been for fun for me. And to get to do that female character that I have always wanted to do. So, like, when I do my pageant this summer, I’m doing a, my talent is doing a scene from Waitress the Musical and I get to perform a song I absolutely love from that show and it’s given me the opportunity to portray a character that I love. So, for me it’s all about the performance and the fun of it.

Interviewer: I love that answer. So alright, last question, um, what do you think are some misconceptions people have about drag and where do you think those misconceptions come from?

CeCe Drake: The biggest misconception, and I dealt with from my own family, is that I didn’t want to be a boy anymore, I wanted to be a girl. My own fiancé’s family doesn’t really understand it, they are a little uneducated to the aspect of drag. I think the biggest misconception is that I want to be a girl and I don’t want to be a boy anymore, because I want to wear heels and a dress for a couple hours at night. And it is not necessarily that I want to, because heels are not comfortable, you know! But there’s something about it that’s empowering to be that person for a couple of hours. But the biggest misconception is that I didn’t want to be a boy anymore, that I wanted to be a girl and that we all, like, want to be women, we don’t want to be men anymore. I don’t think I’ve ever dealt with any other people who don’t understand, other than that was the reason they didn’t understand why I wanted to do drag. Not because I wanted to be a performer, but because I want to be a female.

Interviewer: So, what do you think would help change that? Have you found ways to help people understand?

CeCe Drake: I think, for me, it’s just, you know, talking with them, for them to be like “Why do you want to be a drag queen, why do you enjoy it” so I can sort of be like “Well, it’s because I like to be able to portray Roxie Hart from the musical Chicago, she’s one of my favorite characters and this gives me that opportunity, or I want to forget my stresses from today and be somebody else for the night.” But, I think communication and educating people, and I think that drag queen story hour is such an awesome thing, I don’t know if you’ve talked about that much, but that is something that I think is awesome and I think it gives an opportunity for queens to educate to children at such a young age and families too, it gives them an opportunity to educate them about that. And I think that if someone doesn’t truly understand, that the internet is a truly strong source, and a reliable source, to understand why men want to be queens. But it can be also be misleading sometimes. Definitely talking, I never have a problem explaining why I want to do drag, or why some men want to do drag. I can’t speak for everyone, because my reasons are not the same as everybody else’s, but my reasons are for the performance aspect and the exhilarating moment you get from stepping onstage as that character. So communication is the biggest thing, I think, to helping people understand.

Interviewer: Well I am so happy I got to talk to you today about all of this!

CeCe Drake: Yeah, I’m excited to. I hope I can kind of hear the final product of what you’re putting together. I’ll definitely send you my e-mail or whatever you need. I’m excited, I hope you got enough information, I kind of rambled.

Interviewer: No, it’s great. We can sit around and learn about drag all day and we can watch RuPaul’s Drag Race and go to drag shows, but until you sit down and actually talk to someone who’s been through it, it opens up your mind more, so I’m so happy that we got to talk.

CeCe Drake: And you know, reach out in four year after I’ve done it for four more years and I’m sure I’ll have more insight and more tips and a better understanding myself, I’m new, I’m what I would call a baby queen, and if I could open your eyes and your mindset a little bit more from just doing it for a year and a half, then that’s super exciting and I feel like I’m utilizing drag in a positive way.

Interviewer: Right! So you’ve been doing it for a year and a half, you said?

CeCe Drake: Yeah, my first time was about a year and a half ago. I just recently committed to wanting to do it more full time, in my free time, so, yeah. So a year and a half is about how long I’ve been doing female impersonation.

Interviewer: You’ll have to let me know when there’s a show around, I’d love to see you.

CeCe Drake: Yeah! I’m doing some bookings for this summer so I’ll definitely shoot you an e-mail with some dates and I’ll let you know when and where.

Interviewer: Yeah! If you’re ever in the Saint Louis area, that’s where I live so if I’m ever back home I’ll come see you.

CeCe Drake: Yeah Saint Louis is one of the places where, there’s a drag queen out there I know, her name is TabiKat and she’s a pageant queen. She was Miss Gay Missouri, America and Miss Gay Missouri US of A. So definitely look her up on Instagram, she’s a really good queen and I look, that’s another one I look up to when it comes to pageantry, because she’s a queen that I think I could follow in pageantry and do well following her, her tips and her guidance and the way she carries herself.

Interviewer: That’s awesome. Well, I’ll let you go! Thank you!