# **Interview with Die Anna**

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Interviewer: And then, were you able to take a look at that consent form I sent you?

Die Anna: Yes

Interviewer: Did you have any questions or anything?

Die Anna: No, it seemed pretty straightforward

Interviewer: Okay well, if you don't have any questions, I guess I will just get started. So, the first question I have is, when did you first hear about drag?

Die Anna: I originally heard about drag first when I was about six years old through like weird internet searches. And then later I rediscovered it through RuPaul’s Drag Race, season one when it came out. I was like nine years old, or 10.

Interviewer: What would you say was your initial reaction to it?

Die Anna: I was kind of amazed but also kind of scared of it, because everyone on the screen was huge, but they were also colorful and bright and creative, full of personality and talent.

Interviewer: And why would you say that you were scared of it?

Die Anna: Because as like a little kid seeing people that are like huge, larger than life characters with giant hair and costumes were always kind of intimidating to me.

Interviewer: Definitely, do you want to explain more about why maybe intimidating?

Die Anna: I believe it could be more intimidating for people that don't understand it or who are not like, exposed to it at an early age. They don't know what it is. But the fear of the unknown more so than fear of the actual people?

Interviewer: Definitely, when did you start performing as a drag artist?

Die Anna: I started on May 12th, 2018, I still remember because it’s Mother's Day.

Interviewer: Okay, do you want to explain maybe a little bit more about your first experience?

Die Anna: Okay, so my first experience was in Los Angeles, California in a bar called Bar Manichean which no longer is open for business anymore. But it was a competition. Hosted by a queen named Pickle. And I competed against I think three or four other newer drag queens at the time. And I got second place, which was really exhilarating for me as a brand new performer

Interviewer: Yeah that's awesome, why would you say that you started performing drag?

Die Anna: I would say I started performing because, eventually over time between ages of like nine and 20 years old, they just kept like, a lot of the different points of my life kept leading me back towards the art form. It's like painting or music or designing or hair styling. It just kept bringing me back towards like that sort of concept. And it became more fun when I realized I could create my own persona and my own character and look and performance style.

Interviewer: That's awesome. How did your family, friends and other loved ones receive you becoming a drag artist?

Die Anna: At first my family was, well, actually, my family wasn't really shocked in any capacity because I always had like a big, weird personality growing up. And it seemed like, I guess the logical step forward or I guess in their case, nothing that would have been too out of the way for who I was my entire life.

Interviewer: Okay, so would you say that they're supportive of this.

Die Anna: Yeah, they're very supportive. I've had family members come to my shows when I'm performing around the country if they can.

Interviewer: That's awesome, where does your drag name come from?

Die Anna: I'm very inspired by Princess Diana. Diana Ross. Pretty much anybody that was like big in the 90s, and previous to that, but also I'm really inspired by like goth 90s culture and rave culture and things that are that can be seen as very dark and heavy. So instead of like Diana traditional spelling, I just spelled it D-I-E Anna.

Interviewer: Oh, okay so it is Die Anna, I've been calling you Anna, I'm sorry.

Die Anna: Oh, no, it's okay. A lot of people surprisingly get confused by that. Because one is a name and one isn't. But it just is all one thing

Interviewer: Okay, I'm sorry about that. So, there are a lot of terms and types of styles of drags from like, drag queens, drag kings, glamour queen, comedy queen, bearded queen. What kind of drag do you do? What's your style of drag?

Die Anna: I would say primarily, I'm a drag queen, but I do some male presenting performances as a drag king, I would say like alternative drag performer is like the overarching name for what I do.

Interviewer: okay, do you want to speak more about like your drag king performances because I've never heard of alternative drag performers.

Die Anna: So, I would say I would consider alternative drag performance, anything to be that - Well, anything that is not traditionally associated with drag. So, for me, my fashion style is darker, more gothic, edgy, leather, lace, like latex, things like that. But with my performance style, I don't really - I perform music that's more heavy or gothic or strange or alter, like an alternative pop music and things like that

Interviewer: Okay, does the type of drag that you do affect your life as a drag artist?

Die Anna: Yes, I would say it does sometimes make it a little bit harder to receive work or be hired for shows. Because either I don't fit in with what is like being looked for. And like a casting situation. Or I would be booked with a lot of people that are a lot more alternative than me. I wouldn't be seen as alternative enough, if that makes sense - I'm like in a weird middle ground.

Interviewer: How have you dealt with then finding performances, do you have to take additional steps or-?

Die Anna: For me personally, I just don't let it bother me. So originally, when I started drag, I was afraid- more afraid of not getting as much work because of like, my racial background or my gender identity or things like that. But then I just had to pull up, put all of those things to the side and just work on my craft itself. And the people that will, you know, hire me for an event will still hire me whether, whether it's don't hire me based off of my work ethic, rather than what can be seen as my presentation.

Interviewer: Do you consider your drag to be political?

Die Anna: Oh, absolutely. I would consider my drag to be political. In some instances. I would say less about my performance style or my performance contact, but with how outspoken I am via social media on issues that matter to me.

Interviewer: Do you want to speak a little bit more about that then your stance on how you use drag in a political sense, even without your performances?

Die Anna: Yes, so like through social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, I’ll usually post, on a day to day basis I would post resources for homelessness, for trans wellness and other things like that. And usually more so on Twitter I would more actively speak on topics that pertain to me with like racism in America or random new topics like with Dwayne Wade’s daughters, I are here just to let people know that hey, black drag queens really have a voice and we can't really be silent

Interviewer: So, I guess my next question will kind of build off that. So how have your different social identities so your race and gender everything like that, how has that impacted your drag?

Die Anna: I would say, in a really strange way. I probably I didn't start my transition into womanhood, until I became stable on my drag career, because I've always have the apprehension that because people view with like, actual like women, people that identify as women as drag queens, that it would be seen as not as impressive or not as widespread and not as respected, but eventually I just had to come to terms that if I'm not being hired for an event or a party, that I probably shouldn't work with them to begin with if they can't respect who I am.

Interviewer: Definitely, how has your social identity in terms of race? What do you think impacted your drag or drag has impacted your terms of race?

Die Anna: I would say that - I'm also very lucky in the sense that I've been working and performing in downtown Los Angeles and more so in like spaces that are run by people of color at all times. So, I have to worry less about not receiving a booking for a show due to my race. But I don't know it's a conversation that's kind of like, in the moment I would have with people who are the ones that are producing content with me, if that makes any sense. It's more of a case by case basis.

Interviewer: How do you personally identify in terms of your sex?

Die Anna: I would say that I am a transgender woman.

Interviewer: Okay and then is that gender expression inside and outside of drag then?

Die Anna: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so can you talk to me just in general what your life is like as drag artist?

Die Anna: As a drag artist it is - I'm usually in drag about three days a week, I would say. It obviously depends on how often I'm working or how often I'm just going out for fun while doing drag, but I was - yeah, overall about three days a week- three, four days a week I would be in drag

Interviewer: And are those three four days do you are those performance days are you just the whole day you're in drag?

Die Anna: I would say they're usually performance days. But sometimes I'll go out to night life events that I frequent just in drag because it's more fun to party as a cartoon character essentially than it is to be, you know, a normal drunk person in everyday life.

Interviewer: So, what goes into getting ready for a performance for you?

Die Anna: For me, I don't do as much preparation as I probably should, and as many of the people around me do, I would just pick a song that fits the theme of the performance like the show that I'm performing in, or I’ll just click shuffle on Spotify until I find something that fits my mood for the day of the week, the month or pertains to, like the things that I'm going through in that week.

Interviewer: Yeah. What would you say maybe additional things that go into your performance as far as appearance or -

Die Anna: I would say I take about an hour doing makeup. I'm really impatient usually. So anytime that I'm doing makeup or getting ready in any capacity for longer than that amount of time. I just get frustrated and it's pretty much scribbling on my face like a kid.

Interviewer: I actually understand that, are you part of a drag family or drag house or collective?

Die Anna: No, I do have a lot of friends that are drag queens and I would say the majority my friends, like maybe 90%, are also in the drag community, but I don't have a proper drag family as of right now

Interviewer: Is that like a personal choice? Or is that something you see changing in the future?

Die Anna: I would say I could see that changing in the future because I do like mentor partially some, like newer drag performers that I care about very much so, but I wouldn't necessarily take on a family role in my mind, I think. I feel like I would have to be more established as a drag performer before that happened

Interviewer: You do see that happening, maybe once you're more established in the future?

Die Anna: Yeah, yeah, maybe in like a year!

Interviewer: Okay, what do you think maybe are like the benefits to having like a drag family or a house or collective, do you think there are benefits to that?

Die Anna: Oh, absolutely. Um, usually there are more than - like more minds are better than one I would say. So if you have one idea and you're sitting at home, thinking about that for a month, and then you execute it it's going to be very different than if you were to talk to, let's say two or 10 people who are like looking out for you and looking out for the best for you, giving you constructive criticism of what you can improve or take out or change about a performance, or look or anything that you're doing.

Interviewer: What are the biggest challenges to doing drag and being a drag artist for you personally?

Die Anna: For me, personally, I do deal with a lot of insecurities, sometimes where I can be booked for an event, and then I would look at the lineup, or I would look at the amount of people that are there and I would feel like I'm not equal to the people that are around me. But then like once I perform and once I get onstage and show people what I do specifically, it doesn't really match up with pretty much anyone that I work with. It just makes me feel more unique and more powerful.

Interviewer: Yeah that's awesome, would you say that - or is there anything unique to the drag scene where you live compared to other places in you know, the United States or even the world?

Die Anna: I would say definitely, um, LA has a completely different mindset to their drag community, I think because we are in like a huge media hub of like, movies, music, all that. So a lot of the drag queens that I know, are professional actors in their day to day lives or they are like singers, dancers, like people that are already in the arts community. Also, since a lot of people move in and out of LA so frequently, the scene changes month by month, day to day. Honestly, diversity

Interviewer: Definitely, how has drag impacted or changed you?

Die Anna: I would say I went from being an audience member and a fan of something that is like really special and I started watching drag in person at about 18 years old. So, I went from about three years of me just watching and taking in the content and learning and appreciating to essentially just throwing myself in at a set- like pretty much around my 21st birthday. And just taking all of that and learning every single time I do it until it got me where I am now.

Interviewer: Yeah, has drag impacted your confidence as a person?

Die Anna: Oh, definitely I probably wouldn't even be able to do this phone interview about a year ago because I have severe social anxiety. And I think drag definitely, like helped me like leave my house more and gain more I would say even respect for myself, like beforehand, I wouldn't really see myself as an equal person to the people around me. But now I feel like, with the armor of a character, or persona or like an intimidating look, just even being seven feet tall, walking around my city, just makes me feel more confident.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's awesome. Would you say that your confidence has improved even when you're outside of drag too, because of your -

Die Anna: I would say it depends. There are some days, obviously, like everyone has, where I'm completely unconfident in myself or my abilities or my talents or just generally who I am as a person. But then I just have to look back and say, “Hey, I've created an entire new world for myself in the last like two years almost”. And like that, those are the things that like, mean a lot more to me than being like sad in the moment, you know?

Interviewer: Has drag influenced how you think about gender?

Die Anna: No, not really I always felt like gender isn't, I wouldn't say it isn't real, but definitely is not the most important factor in human life. But I will say that, for me, it allowed to, like live an idea of a female gender before I started transitioning.

Interviewer: How would you yourself define drag?

Die Anna: I would define drag as pretty much anything, I would say movies are drag, music is drag. It's just about creating a character that isn't 100% yourself but somebody that you may aspire to be or aspire not to be?

Interviewer: And then you spoke on a few different influences, would you have any additional people or things that have influenced your specific type of drag?

Die Anna: I would say music artists like Lana Del Rey or anybody that kind of makes music that is intense emotion. I also really like Winona Ryder, like 90s cartoons from like Nickelodeon. And supermodels like Naomi Campbell or Beverly Peele or, you know, people that - people I think I would say people that existed in this space of the 90s, like right before I was born inspire me the most.

Interviewer: Awesome, what do you think is the purpose of drag?

Die Anna: I don't think it necessarily has a purpose. It's just a fun activity and a fun life path that people decide to take. If they think that their creativity can push the boundaries.

Interviewer: Would you say that drag is for everyone do -

Die Anna: Oh absolutely, I don't think there's any limitations with age or race or gender identity or even ability. I know there's like there's a movement of disabled drag performers across I think Europe and the UK specifically. But I know that there even some programs where there are like, 17-year-old, 18-year-old drag performers doing makeup lessons or helping out other people who don't may not have the ability to do it themselves.

Interviewer: Do you think that drag is sexual?

Die Anna: I believe that it can be and sometimes in my performances, there is a sensual or sexual element. But I don't believe that that's a requirement for people to perform with. Like, I feel like some people do depend on it out of laziness versus intention, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah, how would you say drag is sexual?

Die Anna: I would say that drag can be seen as sexual to people who over sexualize - Well, I'll reiterate that. I'll say that if people believe that womanhood is inherently sexual, then they'll see drag queens as sexual, and vice versa, people who use drag as a means to feel more confident about themselves which can lead to sexual liberation. But I wouldn't say it's the focal point of the art form. More so than like painting or making music is.

Interviewer: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense, I like that. In terms of drag kings then, how would you apply, do you think it has the same sexual connotations?

Die Anna: I'll say that with drag kings, especially with drag kings I know, they make fun of the idea of male sexuality and the male gaze. So, with a lot of the drag kings that I know like Clit Eastwood, or Skirt Cocaine. These are people that I know. So, my friend Johnny Gentlemen, and NSFW, and Malcolm Ecstasy, they'll use a flamboyant element to their characters where it can be perceived as male, but it's also not intentionally, it's an overdramatized version of the male identity.

Interviewer: So, I know you mentioned that you have seen it, how do you personally feel about RuPaul's Drag Race?

Die Anna: I've seen pretty much every episode of the show multiple times. But I wouldn't say that it is the pinnacle of drag identity and that most people who do drag probably don't aspire to it. And I would include myself in that demographic of people.

Interviewer: Would you want to elaborate more so on that?

Die Anna: Yeah, I would say that it's, it's a goal for some people just like, getting on any type of reality show is but at the end of the day, you're putting your hands I mean, you're putting your art in the hands of a production staff who wants to make a TV show, not necessarily give you the best opportunities for your life going past that.

Interviewer: Definitely. If you could change one thing about drag or the drag scene, the drag community, what would that be?

Die Anna: I don't think that I would change anything besides making sure that everybody takes their art more seriously and not seriously at all the same breath. Put in the work and the effort but not necessarily be the most serious all the time about it.

Interviewer: What do you think are some misconceptions that people have about drag?

Die Anna: People believe that drag is like an overly sexualized thing for queer people to have in order to - what was the question again? I'm sorry

Interviewer: No, you're fine, what do you think are some different misconceptions that people have about drag?

Die Anna: Okay, so the biggest misconception is actually a problem that's been going on recently with the idea of drag queen story times that have been taking place all across America in the last couple of years. The drag entertainer will go in full character to events, like to a library or like a school, and they'll read a book much like 15 years ago when a firefighter or construction worker would do it and it'd be pretty much accepted. But because somebody is dressed as a character it's, for some reason, to like a religious or conservative people, it's seen as scary or intimidating, or as if the readers have ulterior motive that is like negative or harmful to children which it definitely isn't.

Interviewer: Yeah, where do you think that that like misconception comes from?

Die Anna: I would say that people believe, like a lot of straight people and a lot of Christian or religious people believe that queer people inherently want to prey on children which, even statistically is not the case. Across all - for all countries and all demographics usually like cis white men that do that or cis men in general that are straight.

Interviewer: What do you think are some things that would help change that mindset? Do you think you have any ideas?

Die Anna: Personally, I would say like, and this applies to most people, just learn about other people that are not in your - not in your social circles are not generally in the areas that you live or operate in it. Just to like, you know, educate yourself on how many people are actually in the world and what they look like and what they do and what they actually intend to do with their creativity.

Interviewer: Definitely, do you have any other thoughts on different misconceptions that people have about drag?

Die Anna: At this time, no, I can't think of anything off the top of my head

Interviewer: If you can go back in time, what advice would you give to your younger self?

Die Anna: I would tell myself to start drag at a much earlier age. I would say that I am 22 years old and I started drag technically like the last month of my 20th year. I would say just do it at 16. Like, who cares? If somebody has to say something about you, like, you have the support system behind you to do whatever you want to do.

Interviewer: Do you have any advice for maybe drag artists that don't have that same support system?

Die Anna: I would say save up enough money to leave whatever toxic situation you're in. And if you can't, stay in your bedroom and be safe and like, promote your creativity through the internet.

Interviewer: If you chose one thing you want people to know about drag or to learn about drag, what would that one thing be?

Die Anna: I would say that drag is about spreading love, and compassion and spreading create- like personal creativity, of each individual person. That's about it.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, did you have any other additional comments or anything else you'd like to share, because anything is helpful.

Die Anna: No, but if you have any more questions, feel free to call me.

Interviewer: Okay, that concludes my interview questions feel free to, we want to publish this and put this on, to like send pictures that you’d like to include to me as well, okay?

Die Anna: Okay

Interviewer: Okay, well thank you so much, you have a good night.

Die Anna: You too, bye.