Interview with Roxie M Valentine

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**Maggie:** Hello, my name is Maggie.

**Roxie:** And I am Roxie Valentine!

**Maggie:** Thank you so much for being here, Roxie. Um, I guess...

**Roxie:** Absolutely, baby.

**Maggie:** My question is, where does your drag name come from?

**Roxie:** So, like most, uh, queer homosexuals, I started doing drag because I was a theater baby. And I was actually about to go to school for theater. And let’s be real, with a theater degree, you ain't getting anything from it, except an expensive piece of paper that means nothing to people. Sorry, not sorry.

**Maggie:** [Laughs]

**Roxie:** So, literally, the day I was going to go to college I decided to drop, and I just started crossdressing for a living, and I basically had to do what I was gonna pay a school to tell me to do.

**Maggie:** Okay.

**Roxie:** So then, I got my drag name from the movie Chicago, obviously. So, it’s Roxie... you know how she’s Roxie Hart? I changed the Hart to Valentine and changed the spelling. But then it also plays on my favorite horror movie Bride of Chucky, the main character is Tiffany Valentine. So, it plays with my love of horror movies and everything horror and my love of theater.

**Maggie:** Oh, awesome! I love that. That, kind of, makes me wonder, like, how would you describe your drag? I know you talked about, like, horror and, obviously, Broadway and theater!

**Roxie:** Right. So, my drag is very... like, I would consider myself a very versatile queen. Yes, ladies and gentleman, she’s vers.

**Maggie:** [Laughs]

**Roxie:** Um, because I don’t like to be stuck in one box because that gets very stale and very boring real quick. I have things that I excel in. Like, I excel in doing conceptualized, creepy-style horror drag very... like, doing that very well. But I can also be a pretty glamorous woman at the same time. So, I just like to do everything. Because, this is the thing, if you’re not versatile, you’re not gonna work. You have to be able to work for the audience that is at a specific venue. Like, Attitudes, the people coming to Attitudes, they were all punky, emo, rock style, versus Grey Fox, they’re the older type of, like, crowd. So, they like hearing that good throwback '70s, '80s, '90s music. So, you gotta be able to do everything.

**Maggie:** Okay. Wow. Yeah, thank you for sharing that. I didn’t know, like, different clubs had different, kind of, vibes, different crowds, I guess you would say.

 **Roxie:** And see, that’s the thing too, is it’s our job as drag entertainers to push the boundaries of what is the norm at these places, but also making sure you’re entertaining them with what they want as well.

**Maggie:** Yeah. I know you, kind of, said you don’t really like labels, but one of my questions is that are there labels that you do use to characterize your drag? Or are you just, kind of, you're like, “I’m versatile. I can give you what you want.” [Laughs]

**Roxie:** So, I, I always say I'm, like, they... glamorous, spooky, punk bitch. Like, my, my friends always call me, um, Elphaba’s little bitch niece cousin.

**Maggie:** [Laughs] I love that.

**Roxie:** Because she’s spooky, but she's, like... also has a heart of gold.

**Maggie:** That’s brilliant! That probably makes you a great performer. [Laughs]

**Roxie:** Exactly. I’m not afraid to cut you with a, a knife from the back of my leg, but also, I’ll be nice to you.

**Maggie:** [Laughs] Oh gosh, um, let’s see. I lost... I was having so much fun, I forgot what question I was on. [Laughs]

**Roxie:** You’re like, “Oh my god, I’m gonna have to cut out so much of this interview.”

**Maggie:** No, no, keepin’ it in. Keepin’ it in. You gotta give the kids what they want. [Laughs]

**Roxie:** [Laughs] Oh lord.

**Maggie:** Um, oh gosh, let's see. So, how often do you perform, and where do you perform? Where can the kids find you? [Laughs]

**Roxie:** So, I’m normally always either... so, since Attitudes closed, sadly... that was... that was my home bar. And so, for a while, it was hard to get into being a part of a specific, like, group, because everyone... every bar has their own, like, main cast. So, I, for a while, was very much just floating around Grey Fox, Bar:PM, Rehab. But, like, most recently, I’ve been working with Jade Sinclair. She’s, like, basically adopted me as part of her little drag family at this point. She claims me as her drag, uh, grandchild at this point, because she’s stunning and sweet. Um, so, yeah. But literally, just, I'm all over the city, all the gay bars.

**Maggie:** [Laughs]

**Roxie:** If you can suck a dick in the bathroom, I am probably there.

**Maggie:** Great to know, so, you're there?

**Roxie:** So, I could easily make $200 or $300 in a night, and that is literally the cost of two wigs right there. On top of the fact that you don’t have... what's that called? You don't have, like, credible income because everything’s under the table. So, trying to be like, “Hey, give me this lease for this apartment” is a challenge. Because it's basically like, they either think you’re a stripper or a drug dealer. And then, you just go, “No, I’m a drag queen, sorry.”

**Maggie:** Oh my gosh. Wow. Yeah. And you guys don’t have health insurance either, right?

**Roxie:** No. If you hurt yourself, you hurt yourself.

**Maggie:** Oof!

**Roxie:** You, you keep going and hope, um, you don’t fuck your shit up more.

**Maggie:** [Laughs] Do you perform...? I know you said you perform in person. Do you...? I think I saw on your Facebook, do you perform, like, digitally, like, over stream?

**Roxie:** So, at the beginning of the pandemic... Yeah. At the beginning of the pandemic, when everything was closed down, I did a lot more social, like, media shows. But currently, I am doing an online drag competition called Supreme Drag Race on Instagram. It’s streamed every other Sunday on Twitch. Um, and that’s what I’m doing now, because with corona, obviously, pageants and stuff aren’t as prominent. And a bitch is competitive and likes to win things.

**Maggie:** Yeah. No, I think it’s beautiful that there’s still these competitions going. I mean... I mean, how has COVID, other than, like, moving online, how has it affected your drag life and your mental health?

**Roxie:** So, the bi-- the biggest... the biggest effect that COVID had on just performing, like, live in drag, going back after shutdown, is these face shields and these masks that you have to wear while performing, are terrible. You already... I, I’m a big... I'm a big girl. I already, uh, breathe heavy lookin’ at the refrigerator. So, whenever I’m over there, twirling around, death droppin’ and, like, kickin’, you get winded. And when you have these, like, face shields that are made of solid plastic, 'cause you still wanna be able to see your mouth, it’s not great. I... As soon as I get off stage, I'm like, [heaving], "Help me, Jesus."

**Maggie:** [Laughs] Yeah, I mean, do those, like... Are they the kind that kinda stick out a little bit? Or are they pretty close to your face?

**Roxie:** So, there's like... We, we have the one, that is, like, the face shield, like, just the clear piece of plastic. And then, there’s the one we call the Hannibal Lector, that, like, goes over your ears and your mouth. And you literally look like Hannibal Lector. And that's just like a solid piece of plastic over your face.

**Maggie:** That’s drag, baby, [Laughs] giving you Hannibal Lector realness.

**Roxie:** Exactly! Every time.

**Maggie:** [Laughs] Oh! So, when was, like, the first time you performed in person again since COVID? Like, do you remember?

**Roxie:** So, I don't... Whoa! I know the first time I performed, I think it was when Attitudes, like, reopened. Huh, RIP now. [Laughs] They’re gone. But, yeah, it was... I think it was that. I don't know. I really can’t remember. Here’s the thing, ever since COVID, like, stopped... it didn’t stop, but, like, ever since we were able to reopen bars and everything, I’ve been running nonstop making this dream a reality, like...

**Maggie:** Yeah.

**Roxie:** Performing [inaudible] any time I can.

**Maggie:** Yeah. I mean, you, kind of, have to keep going as a drag artist, don’t you?

**Roxie:** That’s the thing. If you... I don’t want to say to the people that, like, took their break and aren’t returning to drag because they don’t feel safe... I don’t want it... this to come off as rude or a re-- a reed, but you are so easily forgotten once you leave that stage if you don’t keep going. There are new drag artists coming in the scene every week trying to take your spot. And if you’re not promoting yourself, not performing, not at least putting out digital content, you’re gonna be forgotten about. Someone else is gonna take your place.

**Maggie:** Yeah. That's... I would say, does that seem like a new challenge? Like, is that... is that part of the challenge now, you think, of being a drag queen or a drag artist, versus, like, in the... in the heyday?

**Roxie:** I think it’s always been that way because there's always... I, I know when I started, the girls, like, the older generation were scared of me because I was coming into the scene. 'Cause that’s the thing, babies are coming in, and, eventually, they’re not gonna be babies anymore, and they’re gonna be the ones taking the jobs of the older generation who are starting to fizzle out. And that’s threatening.

**Maggie:** Yeah. Wow. Huh. Um, hmm. That brings up, like, a lot of questions.

**Roxie:**[Laughs] [Unclear], yeah.

**Maggie:** It kinda makes me wanna ask, like, do you remember when you first heard about drag or when you learned about it? Is that something you can remember?

**Roxie:** So, I first learned about drag from watching The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Like, I feel like that’s a bunch of people’s, like, introduction to queer culture, like, seeing Rocky Horror Picture Show or, like, even just seeing Hairspray and the character of Edna being played by a drag queen. That’s like their first introduction to seeing, like, “Oh, what’s this? This is kind of cool.” And then, you just blossom out into finding other things.

**Maggie:** Yeah. It’s so beautiful to see people find themselves through different pieces of queer culture. And that's... it’s so funny, I feel like I’ve heard a lot of people that they found drag through Rocky Horror Picture Show. So, I love that. [Laughs]

**Roxie:** Exactly. It, it just... it gets ya. If you watch Rocky Horror Picture Show, you will be a drag queen.

**Maggie:** Yes. [Laughs] Um, when you first became a drag queen, is there anyone who you, like, came out to as a drag queen that you can, like, remember their reaction, like, so much in, in your head, uh, whether good or bad?

**Roxie:** Not really. This is the thing. Like, I was always dressing up in my mom’s, like, clothes and heels and shit, and, like, putting on crappy dollar store wigs and just feeling my fantasy. I remember, in high school, for Halloween one year, I went to school just in drag, boogered on boots. But, like, [laughs] it’s there. I wore a t-shirt under a dress. It was a choice. And a synthetic-ass wig.

**Maggie:** [Laughs]

**Roxie:** But that’s the thing. I think because I’ve been such, like, a... oh, a weirdo my entire life, it wasn’t a shock to anyone. If anything, it was more of a... like a... getting the acceptance for my family to be like, “Okay, this isn’t a hobby. This is what you wanna do as your career,” one of those things.

**Maggie:** Yeah, Yeah. So, do you feel like, um, people take drag as a career seriously? Or most people or some people?

**Roxie:** Yes and no. It really depends, like, who you’re talking to. Because if you don't... if you are not educated about the art of drag and how this, like... the industry works... 'cause it’s just show business. It’s showbusiness for the queer culture. That’s all it is. It’s the same thing. It’s just... people don’t take it seriously because they don’t know what it is, because it’s not a part of mainstream straight culture.

**Maggie:** Yeah. So, are you...? I guess what I, I think I’m hearing is it’s, kind of, delegitimized because it’s part of queer culture, because it’s not the straight, heteronormative, kind of, showbusiness.

**Roxie:** Exactly.

**Maggie:** Okay.

**Roxie:** Exactly.

**Maggie:** Yeah.

**Roxie:** Like, you’ll never look at a Broadway actor and be like, “Oh, they're not ha-- they don’t have a real job.” But you’ll look at a drag queen and be like, “Why aren’t they working at a bank during the daytime?”

**Maggie:** Yeah, exactly. How do you feel about RuPaul’s Drag Race? Thoughts, opinions, tea, all of it. [Laughs]

**Roxie:** Okay, so... you’re trying to get me in trouble, girl.

**Maggie:** [Laughs]

**Roxie:** Do I think RuPaul’s Drag Race has helped branch drag into mainstream society? Yes. Do I think it shows what drag actually is all the time? I do not.Because you’re seeing this dramatized version. Like, yes, there are fights and everything that happen. But at the end of the day, if I went out and cussed someone out like that, how they do on the show, that’s not being a professional. And in this jo-- like, in this industry, you have to have professionalism at all times. Because just like in theater, you cuss one person out, or you do something bad to one person, you blackball yourself. AndRuPaul needs to have a trans woman on the damn show, 'cause I’m sick and tired of not seeing any trans woman, when trans women were the ones who pioneered the art of drag for queer culture. That’s just my opinion.

**Maggie:** [Laughs] Yes ma’am. [Laughs] Yeah, do you...?

**Roxie:** And you can put that in, like, in bold. [Laughs]

**Maggie:** [Laughs] I will. Note to myself, put that in bold. [Laughs] Yeah, um, so you said it’s dramatized, and we know that, 'cause we... I think everyone loves drama, but...

**Roxie:** Exactly.

**Maggie:** But I also think, and I, maybe, wonder if you, um... if you would watch it differently than someone who is straight?

**Roxie:** I, I would... I would say I would because I feel like, as a straight person, you’re watching it as a reality TV show. As a drag entertainer who does something at least similar, maybe not at the same level or caliber, because it’s literally the Olympics of drag, you’re watching it and judging it based on like, “Oh, well, I would do that better,” or, “I could do this,” or, “Ooh, they did that so well.” So, it’s, like, that level of difference of, like, some fucking straight dude's gonna see a pretty man in a wig and go, “I think they’re hot, uhh.”

**Maggie:** [Laughs] Yeah. I, I don’t know how much... so, are you, like, a casual watcher? Are you a fan? How would you, like, classify yourself a part of the show?

**Roxie:** So, I, I at least think that, like, since we... since I am, like, an entertainer that works very often, it’s good to know what’s happening. Because we see Drag Race pioneer frickin’ memes, like, catchphrases that just start to come into, like, mainstream society. So, I at least like to know what’s happening. So, I do make sure to, like, catch up on it every week. But I wouldn’t call myself a superfan.

**Maggie:** Okay.

**Roxie:** Because after you watch the show... I... Like, when I started, obviously, I was like, “Oh my god, Drag Race!” And then, you get to start working with these girls, and you realize they’re not much different than you; they just got their big break.

**Maggie:** So, do you feel like there’s a hierarchy of drag queens? Does that... is that a kinda question that I...?

**Roxie:** What do you mean by... what do you mean by that?

**Maggie:** Um, like, girls who are on RuPaul’s Drag Race are seen as better than, like, um, local performing queens who haven’t been on Drag Race?

**Roxie:** Oh, exac-- uh, yes, 100%. Just because most people that are watching on, on the TV, watching those queens, then only come out to that night that that, like, performer is there. And that is normally their first introduction to the local drag that is around them. So, they tip and, like, cheer for the Drag Race queen because they don’t know anything, they don't know any better. But that is your job as a local entertainer to show them what they are missing, to bring them out to the bars when you don’t have a Drag Race girl there.

**Maggie:** Yeah. That was very well said. Yeah. What are...? Hmm... do you ever travel for drag? Or have you travelled for drag before?

**Roxie:** I have. So, that's, that’s one of my favorite things about drag, is that you, very much... if you have your chances to travel, take them, because you're very much getting paid to experience different parts of, like, the country and the world. Recently, I was lucky enough to go visit a sister out in Terre Haute, Indiana to perform out there with her, and it was amazing. I’ve done Chicago, I’ve done Wisconsin, I’ve done the Austin International Drag Festival before. Like, if you have the chance as a... like a local girl to travel, do it.

**Maggie:** She’s a travelling girl. [Laughs]

**Roxie:** Yeah. I will say that if I could get, like, so fast [unclear], so I need to... ooh, ooh, did it...? Okay. I had a low power mode come on, I was like, "Shit! I didn't bring the power [unclear]."

**Maggie:** Oh no! [Laughs] You're good. It will probably be a few more minutes, and then we can probably finish.

**Roxie:** Okay.

**Maggie:** So, I have a really fun question, and I’m excited to hear what your answer would be. If you could go back in time as Roxie M Valentine, what advice would you gi-- would Roxie give to your younger self?

**Roxie:** I would tell myself that you are not the shit, starting out, because you think you are as soon as you step out. Because when you... when you start drag, you automatically have this confidence that you don’t have as your normal, like, everyday self. But that can come off very arrogant and rude. So, I would tell myself to be a nicer woman 'cause, uh, I was a bitch when I started. But I've learned to be a nice... a nice girl.

**Maggie:** [Laughs] Yeah, because you said, in your industry, professionalism is key, right? You have to know how to work with people.

**Roxie:** Exactly. And so, starting off, if you think you’re better than everyone, you’re not. You need to be able to learn from people. 'Cause they’re the ones that are em-- basically, your employer. The girls that are there booking the shows and the show directors are basically your boss. So, if you are acting too good to them, they’re not gonna wanna work with you.

**Maggie:** Yeah. [Laughter] Um, if you could change one thing about the drag scene or the community, do you know what it would be?

**Roxie:** That’s a good question. The first thing that comes to my mind would be to make sure we save these queer spaces because we are losing queer spaces at a rapid rate. Like, COVID hit queer industry harder than it hit any other industry, let’s just be real. Without these queer spaces, queer children do not have their first opening to being 100% purely, like, themselves. I know, when... as soon as I turned 18, I was at the bars, meeting people. If it was not for these bars, I would not have my... like, my chosen family. I don’t know where I would be right now.

**Maggie:** Yeah, I wonder what we can do? Do you have any advice for, you know, people like me and you to keep queer spaces around or to do more for the queer community? Like, what are... what’s some advice?

**Roxie:** The best... like, the most we can do is support these businesses. These businesses need your support. Whether it’s going there and getting a, a drink, a soda, a piece of pizza, whatever they sell. If you don’t wanna drink, you don’t have to drink. But do something to support these businesses. Go tip the girls for a round. Bring your friends, show them. 'Cause I guarantee, at least... Are you... how do you identify?

**Maggie:** Um, bisexual, just cis woman.

**Roxie:** Okay, okay. So, like, you take your girlfriends out for a night on the town for fun. I guarantee the queer space gay bar is going to be more fun than the hetero straight bar, period.

**Maggie:** Period.

**Roxie:** It’s gonna feel safer and more fun. And once we lose that, it’s gone.

**Maggie:** Yeah. Yeah, that’s great. I think... I think people forget, and they feel, kind of, small, um, and they feel like they can’t contribute, but really, every little... it sounds like what you're saying is every little thing counts!

**Roxie:** Exactly. That’s the thing. You might not think your $4 drink counts, but 10 of your friends getting that $4 drink is paying somebody’s bills that night.

**Maggie:** It all adds up.

**Roxie:** Exactly.

**Maggie:** Okay. Last question here.

**Roxie:** Yes.

**Maggie:** If you could choose one thing you want people to know about drag, what would it be?

**Roxie:** You got me in a standstill here. I'm like, "Dang!" I feel like I’ve touched on most of the things that, like, I want people to know. So, I’m, like, not trying to repeat myself.

**Maggie:** It’s totally okay. Take your time.

**Roxie:** Um, I feel... I, I want people to know that drag is an art form. It’s not a sexuality. Even... like, there is a difference between drag and transgender, and drag is the art form of gender expression. So, it does not have to be done in one way. Every single way you do drag is valid. Not all drag is good, but all drag is valid. [Laughs] There is a difference.

**Maggie:** Put that on a shirt. [Laughs]

**Roxie:** [Laughs] #Merch

**Maggie:** [Laughs] Everyone go check out the link in the bio. [Laughs]

**Roxie:** You think I’m joking? I got merch. I’ll sell it.

**Maggie:** Yes. I’ll link your merch for sure. [Laughs]

**Roxie:** Period.

**Maggie:** [Laughs] Alright. Well, thank you so much for talking to me, I really appreciate it.

**Roxie:** Absolutely. Thank you!

**Maggie:** Um, I will send you the link of the blog post if you want to check it out and read it when it’s done.

**Roxie:** Okay.

**Maggie:** Alright. Thank you so much. Have a great night.

**Roxie:** You too. Have fun.

**Maggie:** Bye.