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Claudia: When did you first hear about drag, and what was your initial reaction to it?

Ivy: So it's going to sound really lame but like I just saw an ad for RuPaul’s Drag Race and I was like that looks kind of cool. I don’t know, I’ve never really been the person to be judgemental about anything like that so I was just kind of like oh that’s cool. Then I kind of got into it more and started doing research on it and yeah.

Claudia: Cool, then what was your initial reaction to it?

Ivy: I was amazed because there was a lot more to it than people think.

Claudia: Yeah in this class I’ve learned so much about it I was like, “Yeah this is way more intense”

Ivy: Yeah it’s a whole project.

Claudia: Yeah definitely. And then, when did you start performing as a drag artist and why did you get into it?

Ivy: So I’ve only been performing since January because of quarantine there hasnt really been really any like amature nights available. I’ve been practicing drag makeup, that’s what I picked up during quarantine, like whenever it first started. So I was just kind of like building up my makeup, getting all of that down, getting some things started. Um yeah I forgot the other part of your question I’m sorry.

Claudia: Why did you start performing?

Ivy: Um, I started performing because I like, I’ve always liked performing um I used to be in like choir and theatre and drama and I was just kind of like, I mean like, I just missed performing, I missed the outlet that it gives me and yeah.

Claudia: Awesome. And then how did your family, friends and other loved ones receive you becoming a drag artist?

Ivy: So my mom is very supportive, like her side of the family is very supportive of it, my mom comes to a lot of my shows. She tries to come to as many as she can. My dad is from a very conservative town so it kind of took him a little bit to kind of like educate him and get him around to the idea, but he’s definitely gotten a little more receptive to it, he’s a little better with it. My friends on the other hand were kind of like “when’s your show I’m coming?”

Claudia: That’s good that you have a good support system for it though.

Ivy: Yes definitely I feel very lucky to have a support system.

Claudia: And then, so you told me your drag name is Ivy Taboo, which I love, but where did your drag name come from? How did you come up with it?

Ivy: I’m gonna be honest I looked up on google a drag queen name generator, which I didn’t even know existed, but it popped up and first I was going to be Phoenix Monroe, but I didn’t really like that so one of the other names was Ivy Taboo but I hadn’t had the chance to change the name around because of social media because it wouldn’t let me keep Taboo the same word, for some reason. Because they said that’s not a real person.

Claudia: That’s cool that you did that though because I know a lot of bands say they just went on random band name generators, and I know rappers do that too. So that’s kind of cool. There are a lot of terms for types and styles of drag from drag queens and drag king to glamor queen and male impersonator, comedy queen, all of those. Are there particular labels you would use to characterize your drag?

Ivy: I definitely would identify with just a drag queen. I don’t really like to use afab or bioqueen because to me personally it’s kind of not as inclusive as I thought it was whenever I first started out. So I try being as inclusive as I can. I was still trying to find my persona so I don’t really use campy queen or glamor or anything like that, I’m just kind of figuring out who Ivy really is and building on it.

Claudia: Since you said you started in January, so I’m sure you’re still trying to figure what kind of drag you want to do, because my next question was what kind of drag do you do, or what style, but are you still trying to find that?

Ivy: I do know that Ivy’s a little bit alternative and really likes musicals, that’s about as far as I’ve gotten. But I definitely try to keep people on their toes, not perform the same number more than 3 or 4 times unless it goes over really well.

Claudia: Do you have a favorite kind of songs you do? Is it usually like the same genre? Like you said, you like musicals so do you stick with musicals?

Ivy: I typically try to do musicals every now and then because audience perception is such a huge thing with drag and a lot of audience members don’t know musicals that well so i try to do like top 40 or throwback songs like Avril Lavigne I’ve tried doing. I've tried doing some Ashnikko recently and it’s gone okay but yah.

Claudia: So do you usually base the next song you're going to do off of the crowd’s reaction to it?

Ivy: Yes, in a sense. Luckily, before I started performing I was able to go to a few of the bars I’ve performed at so that way I can see what songs go over well. Like what kind of music, so I kind of just pick and choose like this goes over really well at this bar where at this bar it doesn't go over very well at all.

Claudia: Okay, that’s interesting. My next question was going to be, is the type of drag that you do affect your life as a drag artist, and if so, how?

Ivy: I definitely don't think it does, I felt pretty welcomed coming in. The only thing is that some people will try to tell me to really over accentuate every aspect which I'm not personally a huge fan of. That's just not for me but I definitely like over accentuating what i can and what i can do so it's just kind of like you pick and choose what advice is given to you.

Claudia: Yah and going off of that I was going to ask you , because I know you're a woman dressing in drag as a woman. So have you ever received backlash for that? Because I know that it sometimes happens in the drag community since some people see it as an advantage although I do not personally think that way.

Ivy: I have definitely been lucky. I haven't gotten very much backlash towards it. The only thing I have been asked really is if I was transgender, which I am not but I just kind of said no I identify as a cis gendered woman, this is just what I do. I have had somebody try to reference my kind of drag as a stripper. I told them I did drag and they said “oh kind of like a stripper” because you collect tips and I was like no, it's not like stripping at all.

Claudia: So do you kind of get labeled? Do you think you get more labeled for it as being a cis gendered woman going into drag?

Ivy: I can definitely see it that way yes, but I try not to use any labels but I will just try to be upfront and say I am a cis gendered woman, this is just what I do as a hobby.

Claudia: Okay, and then do you have any influences for your drag? Any one person or thing that influences your kind of drag style?

Ivy: Definitely, there's this one queen in St. Louis, her name is Roxy Valentine. I really like her because she is alternative and she’s the first person I ever talked to about drag and to get advice. So she is definitely a big part of it. I try to do anything in pop culture and just kind of make it a little bigger and add my own taste to it. That way the audience will somewhat know what it is.

Claudia: Okay, so going off of what you said like Roxy Valentine, has she guided you through the process of all of your drag performances?

Ivy: So, we talked during quarantine and then she started getting booked for shows a lot so it kind of fizzled out which there isn't any drama, nothing happened, just both of us got busy. But, I’ve definitely talked to her and a few other queens I talked to and they really guided me through. Like “hey don’t do this” and “hey, maybe do this, try it”. So it's definitely been very helpful to get more experienced queen’s advice, especially since I'm still new.

Claudia: That’s good that you have a good support system behind you. Do you consider your drag to be political at all?

Ivy: I do not. I try to not do anything too political right now, I am hoping to do a little bit more political in the future but as of right now, no.

Claudia: Okay, and then can you talk about what your life is like as a drag artist?

Ivy: I can, so typically I...are you just wanting the process of getting ready?

Claudia: I guess more like are you a part of a more specific drag family? How often do you perform? How long does it take you to get ready? So yah, you can go through the entire process if you’d like.

Ivy: I am not a part of a drag family as of right now. I used to be a drag child to a drag queen named Brianna Burns. But we kind of realized that we are a little too similar so she is now one of my best friends and we just give eachother advice not as a drag mother and daughter and it is a lot better that way. Typically I will do...I have kind of cut back because of school and I am trying to get good grades so I only try to do three to five shows a month. But, if I get booked more then I get booked more so I just work around it. How I get ready; I typically do my make up at my house and then I pack all my stuff in a suitcase and get in my car, then drive to the venue and then get ready in the dressing rooms there. Not very exciting.

Claudia: How long does it usually take you to get ready for each show?

Ivy: Typically the makeup is about an hour or an hour and a half

Claudia: Oh wow

Ivy: Then actually doing hip pads, tights, and putting on the actual outfit, it takes about 30 to 45 minutes.

Claudia: Okay, so when you go out and perform are you normally performing one song per night?

Ivy: It depends on the show, some of them book you to do three, like I know I'm booked at a show at the end of April and they are wanting me to do four different numbers. So it is really just what the show director is wanting. Anyone that I have done right now hasn't been more than two which isn't really that bad.

Claudia: Okay that's cool. Then I was going to ask how covid affected your drag but I know you started in covid so you have never been in the scene when it has been normal. So that is interesting. Has anybody told you how it has been before compared to now?

Ivy: A lot of queens are like yah I kind of miss not performing with a face shield, the clear face masks we have to wear. I’m used to it because that is all I have ever done is just perform with a clear face shield or face mask or whatever the case is.

Claudia: Yah, I noticed in the selfie that you sent me it was a clear mask which is honestly good because I feel like that would be so annoying to have to wear one that covers your face when you just did all of your makeup.

Ivy: Yah, it’s really not that bad, the only issue I have as of right now is that the face shield I cannot see hardly at all with it on so I am very lucky that I got that face mask because I can at least somewhat see where I am going.

Claudia: Then I was going to ask...You said earlier that you identify as a cis gendered woman correct?

Ivy: I do

Claudia: Okay, and when you are in drag you also identify as a woman?

Ivy:Yes

Claudia: So, has drag influenced how you think about your gender at all?

Ivy: Not really, just maybe a little more open to pronouns per say. Like, I do identify as cis gender but; its going to sound really weird; but Im fine with like any pronoun. Any pronoun is good with me but, I prefer a woman, I prefer to be a cis gendered woman.

Claudia: So you don’t mind if someone were to identify you in a different way?

Ivy: No

Claudia: Okay, that’s interesting. How has drag impacted or changed you?

Ivy: It has definitely educated me on trangender rights and just the transgender community in general because coming into it, just going to shows before covid, I was not very educated on the whole scene and I was not educated on transgener rights. That has really kind of opened my eyes to it and the discrimination against it.

Claudia: Okay, has drag impacted your confidence as a person when you're out of drag?

Ivy: It has definitely made me a little more confident in some of the things I do. I am a little more confident to stand up for what I believe in and not really back down quite as much.

Claudia: Yah, so do you find drag to be a more empowering form of art for you?

Ivy: Oh absolutely

Claudia: Okay, and then I want to ask, how do you personally define drag?

Ivy: I personally define drag as an art form and however the person wants to display their art form is valid, it’s expressive, it’s a way to get any frustration out. I know if I’m frustrated with school or anything like that, I can go perform a ballad or perform a song then I just feel better. I take it more, like I said, as an artform; a therapeutic approach. Some people define it as a job which it kind of is but I prefer to think of it as an artform.

Claudia: Okay, cool. What do you think is the purpose of drag? Or if there is one specific purpose?

Ivy: I think the purpose is to entertain people but as well as to get people's attention and really have them forget any issues that are going on in their life, just for a little bit. They will have a show to at least be at.

Claudia: Okay, and I know you said coming in as a woman that people assumed that it was like stripping, so do you see drag as a sexual thing?

Ivy: Not all the time no, it just depends on the person. Some queens like to be sexy and do burlesque and things like that but that is totally just up to them.

Claudia: So it just depends on the drag queen?

Ivy: Yah

Claudia: Okay, I know you said that when you got into drag that you saw RuPaul’s Drag Race, so how do you feel about that whole show?

Ivy: I think it’s a good way to atleast show off drag queens, I would like if they would include...like they have gotten a little better because of this season they have a transgender male who is a drag queen. But, I personally would like if they had an afab queen if that is how you identify or like me, a woman that just does drag. I would prefer if they had that and wasn't as solely set on like, “okay you’re just a drag queen”, I would love to see drag kings on there but not my show.

Claudia: Yah, I was curious to see what you had to say about that because I know that their representation on the show is sometimes limited to the amount of drag and for me, going into this drag class, that is really what I saw it as; just what I saw on RuPaul’s Drag Race. Just men dressing up as women so do you think that the show is a little closed off in that way of representing the drag community?

Ivy: I do think it is a little bit closed off but like I said, they are getting a little bit better with it, but it is kind of baby steps. I will say though, there is a show on Netflix called The Boulet Brother’s Dagula and they are awesome with being inclusive. They have had drag queens, they have had non binary performers, they had all kinds of different drag artists on the show and I just think it is really awesome that they see drag as more of an artform. Whereas I think RuPaul’s Drag Race sees it more as a competition and set rules are in place.

Claudia: I have never heard of that show, I need to watch that then because that seems interesting.

Ivy: Yah, it’s really good. Very good. It is a little gorey I will say.

Claudia: Oh really?

Ivy: Yah

Claudia: If you could change one thing about drag, the drag scene, or the drag community as a whole, what would it be?

Ivy: I would change probably just people’s perception of it. A lot of people are accepting towards it but people are more rude or homophobic about it and eally onlyh appreciate it during pride month things like that. I know that wasn’t your question, I’m sorry.

Claudia: No, literally answer it however you want. I like to hear your opinions on everything so that is good. So going off of that, what do you think are misconceptions that people have about drag?I feel like for me, even going into this class, I had a misconception. I knew women going into drag , I have seen them do drag kings; dressing as guys and just women dressing as men. So what do you think is a common misconception for most people?

Ivy: I think a common misconception is people just think it’s a man dressing up as a woman or a woman dressing as a man. Whereas, it’s really not in my opinion.

Claudia: Yah, going along in this class I was like wow, there is a lot more to this than I really thought and do you think that the representation that is in the media has had a negative impact on those common misconceptions?

Ivy: Not really, I think sometimes it can be a little negative but typically its not negative its just kind of not educated per say. So I guess, yes.

Claudia: Okay I have one last question, if you chose one thing you want people to know about or learn about drag, what would it be?

Ivy: That drag is very inclusive and it is not some underground scene like it was back in the day. We’re not scary people, you can come up to us and say hi or tell us that were pretty; things like that. We won’t bite you.

Claudia: Okay, well thank you so much for answering all those.

Ivy: Not a problem.

Claudia: So I guess I have one more question; so you said that you usually perform in St. Louis?

Ivy: I do

Claudia: Do you usually perform at the same clubs? Or different clubs?

Ivy: I perform at a few different bars, I am just now starting to get booked at different places which is very exciting. I have traveled to Columbia, Mo a couple times to perform.

Claudia: Oh wow, that’s awesome. So do you think as your drag career goes on you will want to travel more places?

Ivy: oh definitely, I love to travel so any reason just to travel in general I would love, especially if I can travel and do drag. That would be amazing.

Claudia: Yah that would be so cool I’m sure. When is your next drag show?

Ivy: My next drag show is tomorrow.

Claudia: Oh really?

Ivy: Yah, I’m traveling to Ccolumbia, MO.

Claudia: Okay wow, well good luck.

Ivy: Thank you

Claudia: Is that your first time going to Columbia then to do drag?

Ivy: It’s my second

Claudia: Okay, well awesome. Thank you so much

Ivy: Yah no problem.