**Interview with Spjork**

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Spjork: Let's party.

Makenzie: Alright, so, if you can go ahead and introduce yourself, my name is Makenzie Pickett and I go by she/her.

Spjork: My name is Spjork, I go by she/her or they/them. Oh, should I say more about myself?

Makenzie: Yeah, you can say more about yourself.

Spjork: I am a drag artist who is currently in Iowa but will be moving to Chicago probably here soon. I post Youtube videos, I do virtual performances. I am easing into performing live again. I am halfway vaccinated and I can't wait to be back on stage again. Um, yeah.

Makenzie: Awesome, okay. When did you first hear about drag and what was your initial reaction to it?

Spjork: So in high school there was a bar that had an all ages drag show at like 5 pm or whatever, so me and my friends, snuck to that and said we were studying and then we went to that bar to watch an all ages drag show and that was when I first ever experienced anything drag related. Um, and then after that it was kind of a typical thing that everyone I think goes through. They may watch two -essential seasons of RuPaul's Drag Race and they act like they know everything. They watch just Trixie and Tatia, who I love, -but it's just like the typical thing that everyone goes through. Then I started to- there was an opportunity in the college town I was in to get into drag and I was like ooo let's live my fantasy. I think after that I just kind of realized that more and more that this is what I was meant to be doing. It was kind of like a weird little trip into it ,was like I slipped and fell into drag.

Makenzie: Yeah. So when did you start performing as a drag artist after your first experience with drag and why did you start performing?

Spjork: I started doing drag mostly because all my friends were doing it and there was a local competition, and I basically started drag to be a part of that competition, or aspire to be in that competition. And then, and that was like 3 years ago- I want to say- It's almost been 3 years. I think it will be 3 years this December. Um, 3-4, oh goodness.

Makenzie: So how old were you, if you don't mind me asking?

Spjork: I was- I wanna say that I was 19. I was 18 when I started messing with makeup and 19 when I was performing.

Makenzie: Okay. How did your family friends and other loved ones react to you becoming a drag artist?

Spjork: I think it took a minute before they realized how serious it was. My dad watched the local competition and literally sent me a super sweet message that was like, ‘I can see you doing this forever.’- It was basically what I needed to hear. I can keep doing this forever and I that I have a future with it. He was telling me that stuff before I came to terms with that. I wanted to do, and even he saw something in it. My mom, she had some questions about it. So after talking about it she understood it more. She even went to a couple of my shows, so did my grandma and my older sister.

Makenzie: You said, did she have some questions, what kind of questions did she ask you?

Spjork: It was questions regarding my gender identity. She felt- she was like- ‘Oh why do you want to?’ Blah blah blah.. or why- she was also confused about- she was like- ‘What about people who want to have sex with drag queens?’ What's their tea pretty much was her question. I was like I don't know- I'm just a drag queen portion of that question.

Makenzie: Oh my goodness!

Spjork: But like after it was a pretty quick talk and she was like whatever and if that's what your tea is Momma, go ahead and do it.

Makenzie: Right.

Spjork: My grandma loves that I do it because she's just happy that I'm performing again and I used to do it in high school and she knows I used to love it. Although she wants me to perform my own original songs, and not just lip sync songs.

Makenzie: So I'm just curious, how old is your grandma?

Spjork: Oh uhmm.. \*laughs\* I am so bad at uh, ages.

Makenzie: That's okay! I was just curious like a general range.

Spjork: Yeah. I want to say that she is probably like 60. I think in my head she is like 54 still.

Makenzie: Yeah.

Spjork: I guess, I'm not sure. Love you grandma!

Makenzie: And where does your drag name come from? Is it original or did you get it off of something?

Spjork: It's kind of- I was looking at silverware and I wanted to make it dumb but have a spin like an artistic spin because at the start of drag that is exactly what I wanted to encompass. So it was just a mix of silverware with Bjork. Who I'm not necessarily a super fan up but they have this great artistic aesthetic that is kind of mysterious that I was like oo, that, but camp it up with silverware so it became Spjork. And at first it really bugged me that nobody could really pronounce it, but now it's kind of like a funny thing like yeah they have my name on their tongue but they don't know how to say it.

Makenzie: \*laughs\*

Spjork: Soo

Makenzie: There are lots of terms for types and styles of drag from drag queen to drag king, to glamour queen, male impersonator, comedy queen, bearded queen, queer artists, bio queen, camp queen, among others. Are there particular labels that you would use to characterize your drag?

Spjork: I mean for me it comes- it's just like me being, at least lately, it is just me and like, hey, -I made this and this fabric told me how to make this outfit kind of thing, I hope that makes sense. But like what other people have described me as, I have definitely heard comedy queen. I recently loved someone said that they like my nonbinary aspect of things and I really like that because I never was intentionally trying to do that kind of thing. I also really like the club kid movement. It's been like my whole tea, so I really like to just push what something- what an outfit can be I guess, but also give it a little bit of me that is still cute. So I guess I don't really know what categories I fit. I know I'm funny!

Makenzie: Yeah! You don't have to fit in a category anyway, I mean like you just be you.

Spjork: I'm the hardest working bedroom queen in Iowa. That is what I like to describe myself as.

Makenzie: \*laughs\* That's awesome. What kind of drag- sorry.

Spjork: You're good!

Makenzie: Does that kind of drag affect your life as a drag artist?

Spjork: Uhm-

Makenzie: Well you said that you are sorta like a nonbinary queen. So do people say anything about that? Or are people very supportive or?

Spjork: I mean that's more just the way that my drag character presents themselves sometimes. I wouldn't say that I necessarily identify as that. I know some amazing nonbinary performers that literally do not get the time of day in some shows just because some people don't understand or, I’ve heard about people locally that have literally bullied other people for their pronoun usage, ya know? That definitely affects a lot of people in the community. I know I have an amazing drag sister named Hazy Buchannan who is a, I believe a cisgender woman, but they were running for a pagent and they got a lot of flack for that because there were a lot of tea and drama about if a woman presenting person could run for a pagent for some reason. That was really upsetting for her and for everyone we were all really mad, that was even a question so. That definitely is something even in the drag community that people are working to be better at for sure, or need to be better at.

Makenzie: Mhm, who or what has influenced your drag?

Spjork: Lately, a lot of my confidence kind of, be myself, has been coming from the iconic women in my life like my friends. My mom, lately I like to think about too cause she has gone through a lot in her life and she like has always been the first person to make a joke about it to get through it and I’m just am really inspired by that because that is kind of been how I thought- I never understood why but lately as of recently. I was like, oh yeah that's because my mom is an actual clown and that's why I'm a clown.

Makenzie: Yeah! So has she kind of influenced your -because you're like a comedy queen and a label that you kind of gave yourself and that other people have given you. Yeah.

Spjork: She influences my ability to kind of handle life. And be like ya know, life is hilarious in the worst ways and the best ways. If you get a bad hand, the best you can do is crack a good joke about it. So-

Makenzie: Right.

Spjork: I am always inspired by a lot of my friends and performers that I see. I also love cartoons and anime and stuff like that. That obviously influences me a little bit.

Makenzie: Yeah! Do you consider your drag political? Why or why not?

Spjork: I mean, I think every- it's a known thing that drag in every sense is political every single time. I have always wanted my drag to represent- no matter what shitty time is going on ,there is always love and you can always laugh at some point. No matter how hard or dark your head gets mentally, like, there is still gonna be- you can always crack a knock-knock joke and get a smile, ya know?

Makenzie: Yeah.

Spjork: So I think in my sense that I always want to use my drag as that. To give people a break from reality, but I also know that reality is reality and you need to use your voice. I like to use my platform at every expense possible to uplift those who don't have as big of a platform or don't have the platform to share. I always want to echo voices. I don't- cause when it's not me suffering, I don't need to be the one's saying things. I want to echo voices because those are the voices that need to be heard. I can shut up and make those voices a little louder.

Makenzie: That's really inspiring. Can you talk about what your life is like as a drag artist. Are you a part of a drag family? a house? or a collective?

Spjork: Yes. My drag family, my drag mom, is Kimmy Black. Formally known as Ebony Bell. They just recently changed their name and they are my drag mom. I think our drag house is house of Caress. Hazy Buchannan, like I said is my drag sister. I also have a lovely drag daughter by the name of Dusty Rose. We are just- we are quite the group of gals if I do say so myself. I would say that we are all iconic, fashion, ladies. Is the best way to describe it.

Makenzie: Do you guys like perform together?

Spjork: Sometimes.

Makenzie: Sometimes?

Spjork: Yeah, almost all of us got our start with the local competition in Iowa city that we did but, after that we kind of since have become really close going through that. Dusty never got the chance to compete and they were like a newer queen that started but they did the same thing that I did to get into drag the first time. Where they grab random twinks from the audience and put them in drag basically. I got to put him in drag the first time and the rest is just history. We are just a little family that likes to talk about horror movies. They love horror movies. That's like all three of thems biggest inspiration. Then you have me who- I'm like- I can watch a horror movie but I have to watch it with people.

Makenzie: Yeah.

Spjork: I'm just the odd one out, but I love them so much. They are really great and inspiring.

Makenzie: How often do you perform and where do you perform?

Spjork: So during COVID- I didn't perform for almost a year. I'm starting to perform now a little more at the Blazing Saddle in Des Moines. But, like I said, I'm going to be moving in June. I'm just trying to collect the money, save it up, and kind of keep my head down in a way I guess. If that makes sense. So, Blazing Saddle and studios I sometimes perform at. I don't really have a set schedule.

Makenzie: Right, you just kind of do it whenever you feel like it or when there's an opening. What goes into getting ready for a performance?

Spjork: It's kind of like a little ceremony. I like to play some music, or if I'm watching Youtube or a movie and, I just kind of get into my makeup. It's kind of an interesting process I guess. I feel like one drag queen's makeup process is almost the same as every other drag queens. There's always going to be some differences but, I don't know. I haven't really felt that my makeup transition is like super crazy because most of the time, I just blink and the next thing I know I'm glamorous I guess is kind of how I like to think about it. I don't like to rush. I like to take my time.

Makenzie: Yeah. What are the biggest challenges to doing drag and being a drag artist?

Spjork: Hmm.. I mean, I've never really felt that people necessarily get it. I know that's partially in my head because if no one is outwardly being like I don't understand, then I shouldn't assume that they don't understand but, I always feel like the people around me are like, oh haha you do drag -I feel like it's like if your friends joined clown college, is what I feel like sometimes where I'm genuinely a clown for a living and that's them just being like ‘ oh haha,’ thats probably the biggest difficulty. I can usually drown that stuff out and if you're able to do that and focus on what you love doing, it's easy. At the end of the day, they're right. I'm a clown. It's funny. I'm still serious about it. Just because they think it's funny doesn't mean that I'm not serious about it.

Makenzie: Mhm. Have they said anything to you specifically?

Spjork: Not like, they’ve just been like -that's just how they talk to you sometimes. When you're like ‘oh I do drag.’ They're just like ‘ohh, cool.’ People are like, ‘Can you do my makeup?’ but that's not even what I'm talking about. I just feel like I know my family doesn't always understand or they see something I do on stage and they're like. ‘You really did that.’ I mean I just did a Youtube video not that long ago where I had hotdogs dangling from the ceiling so I can only imagine what their thought process is.

Makenzie: Yeah, I'll have to check that out.

Spjork: Yass, Youtube.com/Spjork.

Makenzie: Is there anything unique to the drag scene where you live compared to other places in the country or world?

Spjork: Iowa city is like comedy central of Iowa I think. I laugh so hard sometimes going to those drag shows, at least I used to. I convinced my old roommate, Beep-Beep to do a number. They did the X-Files theme where there were no words but it's 4 minutes long and all they did was stare at the audience. They made so much money and it was so funny. We're clowns.

Makenzie: \*laughs\* How has COVID affected you or what has it meant for your life as a drag artist?

Spjork: Honestly, drag really saved me in a way. I find that when I'm doing drag. I am the most zen and comfortable and confident with myself lately. It really is like what I'm meant to be doing. In some facet it's the outlet I can use. COVID was scary because it's like oh god, does this mean anything? Any drag? I think what it did was redefine happiness in a way. So-

Makenzie: Is drag like a therapy for you?

Spjork: Yeah! I think that I just watched this video someone said that, ‘If you can afford a therapist, you can afford to sew.’ Lately I have found that sewing and creating and stuff like that has been very therapeutic.

Makenzie: Yeah!

Spjork: So

Makenzie: Okay. So we kind of covered this one but how do you identify in terms as your sex, gender identity, and gender expression out of drag? What kind of pronouns do you use in and out of drag?

Spjork: Out of drag, I am always, well not always, I- it's hard for me to explain because I don't really know what I would use to explain me because a lot of the times I like to joke that I don't have a physical form and like I think that I, oh goodness, I'm trying to find the right words here.

Makenzie: It's okay. Take your time.

Spjork: I like to think that I just don't, it's not that I don't have a gender because I definitely know that I am a male but I don't always feel comfortable with that. I also know that I have internalized fear of like being too feminie and it being in public and being perceived that way. I think I'm kind of rediscovering that. For now, I'm still a cis man if I absolutely have to put labels down. Just- I would prefer, don't put me in a box.

Makenzie: Right.

Spjork: Just leave me be or just call me Spjork, my out of drag name, they/them, she/her, he/him, just don't be mean is all I really care about. If I am in drag and you call me he, I will make you feel bad. Well, not make you feel bad. I will joke about it because if I am outwardly trying to be my drag performer self, I would prefer to be called she.

Makenzie: Right. So would you say that drag has influenced your sex or gender identities? Has it changed ever since you started doing drag, or?

Spjork: I think in a way. It's kind of been my play on gender. It's kind of been like whenever I feel anxious about how I am presenting out of drag, when I'm in drag. Oh, it doesn't matter, I can literally do whatever. Who is going to tell me I can't do that? You know? I'm trying to ease that mindset in everyday life. If I want to wear a crop top, I can wear a crop top. If I wanna wear whatever I want to wear, ya know, I don't have to worry about what people are going to see or think of me because who cares? It's me.

Makenzie: Mhm, so, have your sex or gender identities influenced your drag in anyway?

Spjork: In a way, I think lately because I have been able to really mess with that and do my more club kid. Where I kind of push what shape is or push what my body looks like, ya know? What my face looks like.

Makenzie: How has drag impacted or changed you? Has it impacted- you kind of talked about how it impacted your confidence as a person. Has it impacted your confidence as a person when you are out of drag?

Spjork: For sure. I realized that especially with COVID that life is too short. Like if I wanna be silly in a grocery store, I don't need to be wearing a wig to do that. Drag is nice because it's like a disguise. Not necessarily a disguise but when I'm in drag, most people aren't going to say anything mean. They're gonna be like you better work. But when I'm out of drag, when I'm being flamboyantly male presenting, for some reason, at least in my head still that there is a weird stigma with that and I’m trying to move past that, like, who cares? I have just as much of a right to be in this space and be as queer presenting as I want to be. You know? I think that's what drag has lately been impacting me with lately. It's all me still. Spjork is still me, it's just me wearing a wig sometimes, ya know?

Makenzie: Mhm. So if you could go back in time as Spjork, what advice would you give Spjork? And what advice would you give to your younger self?

Spjork: To my younger self, I would want to go back and make my mom take away all social media for awhile. I think that social media really like- I grew up with it. It's like huh? I never really experienced- I never really found out myself without social media. It's something that I wish was changed just because it's kind of a broke habit I guess- to be on my phone so much. To past Spjork, I would go back and tell them, who cares? I would just scream at them, who cares? But in the best way. I think that I would need to know that the only people that are judging you are truthfully in my head because that's the only judge that matters. I think that starting drag in a competition setting kind of messed with my mind a little. To where it feels like in my mind that I can only create things if it's going to be well received. In reality, I can just create things so.

Makenzie: Yeah.

Spjork: That is probably what I would tell my past self. Just chill, create, have fun.

Makenzie: I'm curious if or how your social identities have impacted your experiences in drag or vice versa. How has drag impacted your identities? Can you share about how one or more of your social identities such as gender, race, class, age, geography, religion, size, sexuality, disability, etc. And or the interaction with these social identities have impacted your experience with drag and or how has your drag impacted your experience of this social identity?

Spjork: Ohh.. wooo.. come on question.

Makenzie: I know, it's a loaded question.

Spjork: No I- can you repeat it one more time while I form this?

Makenzie: Yeah of course. So how has your social identities have impacted your experiences in drag or vice versa. How has drag impacted your identities? Can you share about how one or more of your social identities such as gender, race, class, age, geography, religion, size, sexuality, disability, etc. And or the interaction of these social identities have impacted your experience with drag and or how has drag impacted your experience of your social identity?

Spjork: Okay, period. Um, I think that drag has impacted me socially in a way. I don't know, I feel like when I am with just any hetero people, when you tell them you do drag or you're gay. I feel like they automatically assume that you're the funniest person in the world. So sometimes when I'm with more hetero presenting people, I feel more just like the gay one that is just with them. I think that through drag I realized what that kind of feeling was. Like seeing how celebrated I can be with queer people and with queer presenting people, I prefer it. I feel more comfortable with people like that versus any hetero people. Basically, I guess there is just like- cause you know sometimes straight people will be like oh that's so gay. That really bugs me. It reminds me of that Hillary Duff commercial, it gets me real mad.

Makenzie: I can see how that could be irritating.

Spjork: Yeah

Makenzie: Okay, so how do you define drag?

Spjork: For me, drag is everything around me and everything about existing through one 3 minute and 45 second number. I have always tend to felt that it was- it's just my outlet to feel like the superstar that I know that I am and feel as iconic as I am. Even if I'm doing a really dumb number and the audience is confused by it, if I think it's dumb and funny, I gonna be like ya know what? I don't care if no one likes it, that was iconic. Ya know? It's just the outlet for me to actually be myself and feel myself and feel comfortable.

Makenzie: Mhm, so what do you think is the purpose of drag if you had to give it a purpose?

Spjork: I think that is different for everyone. The purpose for drag for me is just my purpose. It's just the best outlet for me at least in my life right now to do all of these things that I want to do. I like filming, I like filmmaking, I like this creative outlet and, I love makeup, I love fashion. I've always loved fashion. I've always loved the idea of performing even though I've never been the best singer, I can make that up. It's just everything about it.

Makenzie: Do you think drag is sexual? Why or why not?

Spjork: \*snorts\*

Makenzie: And if so, how in what way?

Spjork: Well, this is what my mom basically asked me. I think it can be sexualized. I think I want to use it more for the way to use it to be more comfortable with my own sexuality out of drag because ya know. There are moments where you can feel sexy - some people want to do drag to feel sexy and that's their prerogative. I don't think all drag is sexual, that's kind of sexualizing everything.

Makenzie: Right.

Spjork: If you think me performing crazy frog is sexy, ya know? I think you're a little weird to me. \*laughs\*

Makenzie: \*laughs\*

Spjork: So.

Makenzie: How do you feel about RuPaul's Drag Race?

Spjork: I think they can definitely work on diversifying obviously. I do watch it, I am an avid watcher. I would love to be on it because as I've said before, I've always wanted to echo voices and I think that with that platform I can use that to the best ability. Not only that but use my ability to keep people -make people happy is kind of like- I want people to smile and take a break from their hard days and just like laugh a little, so I think with that- it's a great outlet for people is basically what I'm saying. It's a great outlet.

Makenzie: If you could change one thing about drag, the drag scene, or the drag community, what would it be and why?

Spjork: I would change how catty it can be. I hate when like a baby queen will be at an open stage and then two other baby queens see that one's makeup and they laugh with each other or something. It's just very toxic behavior that I think locally, it needs to be outgrown, because there's room for everyone. Not everyone is going to be at the same level when they start. Everyone can learn something from everyone, so. I would like to change the cattiness.

Makenzie: Yeah. What do you think are misconceptions that people have about drag? Where does it come from and what do you think would help change that?

Spjork: I think that at least lately, the misconception would be that- not everyone can do drag. Everyone can do it. It's really easy. Well, it's not easy, but it's really easy to have fun with it. So I think that is a big misconception. I'm not really sure how we can change it other than slowly but surely opening our minds and our hearts to things. I also think that drag - I've always loved doing someone's makeup and seeing them transform into this dragged out version of them. You really see who they are. I wish that it were possible to give some crazy, not republican necessarily, but someone who doesn't quite understand and just put them in drag- complete drag, them with an open mind, me with an open mind and see what happens. Someone who doesn't understand it. I think that once you get into that costume, you get into that makeup and that wig, no matter who you are, you're gonna play it up a little bit. Even straight guys who put on a skirt do a strut, ya know? I feel like that's them being confident. So I think drag comes in all forms.

Makenzie: If you could choose one thing that you want people to know or learn about drag, what would it be?

Spjork: Support local girls. Not everyone that's super amazing is going to be on RuPaul's Drag Race. So get on that instagram, look up some local girls. Some of us have Youtube channels, some of us have Tiktok, go comment, go like a Drag Queen's post. Be supportive, it's super easy. You're already on the phone doing nothing. Just go like, comment, and maybe share it.

Makenzie: Yeah!

Spjork: It's just be like if your friend who does painting. If your friend does painting for a living or does art for a living. Just support them you know?

Makenzie: So would you be comfortable dropping your Instagram, your Youtube, for people to follow and support you?

Spjork: My Youtube is Youtube.com/Spjork. S-P-J-O-R-K. My Instagram is @thespjork, S-P-J-O-R-K and the Twitter is Spjork but the o is an x. So S-P-J-X-R-K. My TikTok is just @spjork, spelled regular.

Makenzie: Okay.

Spjork: But I barely post on TikTok, I'm bad at TikTok.

Makenzie: Thank you so much for sharing.

Spjork: Well, of course!

Makenzie: I really appreciate that.

Spjork: Thank you guys for reaching out, this was fun.

Makenzie: Alright, well give it up for Spjork.

Spjork: Yes! Thank you studio audience. Thank you!