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Profiles in Pink

"There's never a wink. It's never about me performing in drag, it's about me portraying the woman I'm choosing to play."

(From: 'Drag on the Map' interview with Sherry Duvall-Covington).

VENUS NICOLE... 7-10

ROSKA... 11-14



LIFE AS A ROCKSTAR IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY

Joshua Valentine interviews Venus Nicole of Modesto.

"Drag queens are the rockstars of the gay community." That's what queen drag artist Julian Moonlight told Venus Nicole, a young drag queen based in Modesto, California. Hailing from the Bay Area's Oakland, that is exactly the type of life Venus would go on to encounter at the beginning of her drag career, behind-the-scenes blackmail and a glitzy semi-tour across Northern California underlying Miss Nicole's unique fusion of Mexican culture with punk rock and glamor.

Venus moved to Modesto when she was 5, both graduating high school and eventually working full time in the mall there, including at its Hot Topic. She began pursuing drag when she was 20, eventually acquiring her family's support after their initial weariness, opting to make gas stops dressed in only makeup rather than her corset and padding. On nights when she doesn't have a shift, Venus comes into her full form backstage at local queer landmarks such as Raging Bull and Splash, the latter of which is typically hosted by one of Miss Nicole's influences, local drag legend Sasha Devaroe. In addition to going by Venus Nicole - a name combining her appreciation for Venus, the Greek goddess of love, and Anna Nicole Smith - she also refers to herself as "La Muñeca", translating to "doll", something her dad once referred to her while in drag.

"Ay viene la Muńeca", Venus recalls him saying one night. She would go on to embody that nature at a show of hers, where her father wheeled her on stage in a wooden box and she arose from it. This stylistic flare, coupled with the clear Mexican-influences of her image, have led her to have a special resonance with Latinx individuals that make up a large part of her fanbase.

However, Venus's presence in the local drag community of her hometown hasn't been without issue, where a queen based in a nearby town began to blackmail Venus and a friend of hers that helped them prepare events. After severing relations with said queen due to toxic behaviors on her part, Venus recalled being let go from a local drag show after the queen contacted the show's organizers and convinced them to not let her perform. This toxicity stems from a larger problem in the drag community, at least in California: popular queens being continuously rotated in the same venues' lineups, and newer queens being shut out of opportunities to further establish their presence. Regardless of petty conflicts, Venus considers the development of community to take importance. "Me, I don't like you, but if I know you could bring something to a performance, I would let you in, because I know it'd be good for the community."

Fortunately, Venus has had luck in the past with scoring gigs outside of Modesto, performing in neighboring cities such as Fresno, Lodi, San Francisco, and Sacramento. In addition to the chance to perform again outside of Modesto, Venus also dreams of having Hot Topic sell special Venus Nicole graphics t-shirts. "I'm hella delusional but (...) eventually my goal is to have my shirt at Hot Topic." Perhaps it's not delusional for Venus to muse about one day selling shirts at Hot Topic in true rockstar fashion. As Julian Moonlight once said to Venus, "In 50 years everyone is going to have a family member that was a drag queen."





NATURAL BEAUTY IN CHICAGOLAND

Joshua Valentine interviews Roska of Chicago.

"What does performing mean to you?" is a question Irregular Girl asked Roska during a masterclass she was teaching about performing in drag at the time. After "swirling, twirling, and kicking" to Outrageous by Britney Spears, Roska seriously reflected on this question asked by the Chicagoan queen after initially deflecting.

Hailing from Washington's Tri-Cities, Roska describes the location of her formative years as nothing like the Stephanie Meyer series Twilight, a popular fantasy mediaverse based in the small, tree-covered town of Forks. Describing it as "dry", with "not a lot of trees", and full of the "same white people doing their same white stuff", Roska's ascent into her drag form was partially a reaction to the drabness of her hometown. In sketches on her notebook during class, Roska conceptualized her persona with spikes, leather, studs, a mustache, and goatee, her self-actualization as a drag queen running opposite of the sports-run suburbia she grew up in. Roska's drag name, inspired by the traditional Mexican pastry Rosca de Reyes, is a testament to the different path she would embark on after graduating from a mostly white environment.

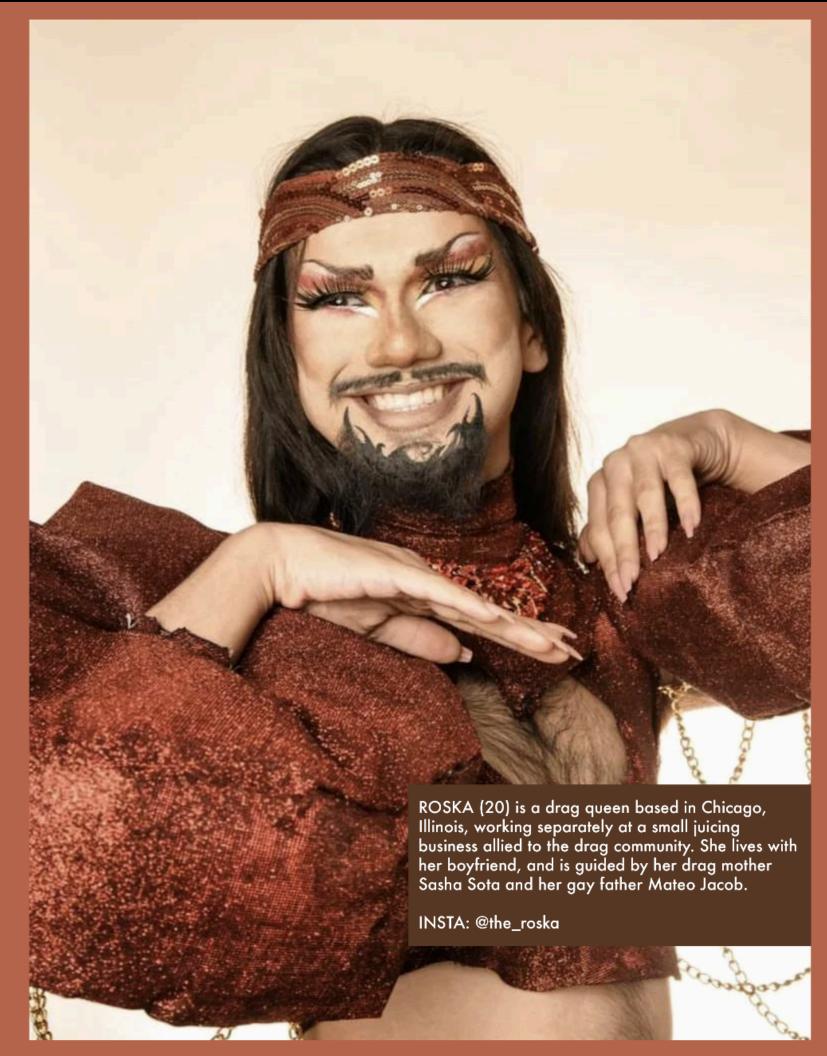
Moving to the diverse Chicago after high school where her long distance boyfriend lived, Roska was motivated to pursue drag based on previous conversations the two had with regards to her earlier sketches. Describing the Chicago drag scene as the "hairiest" - numerous queens dawning beards and mustaches - Roska was first drawn to

the scene by Midwestern queens such as Pearl, Kim Chi, and Trixie, among others. After viewing parties at Roscoe's and a quick, underaged gaze through the windows of the 21+ Boystown, Roska first began to perform in April of 2023 after a year of exploring different fashion styles. Since then, Roska has performed at various events, including once at Chicago Pride and another time competing as Lana Del Rey working at WaffleHouse, accompanied by her boyfriend and an adoring fan base who understand her vision even when she doesn't reach the coveted top 2.

Guided by her drag mother Sasha Sota, as well as her chosen gay father Mateo Jacob, Roska has been preparing for all that comes with being a 21 year old drag queen after her birthday next August. Despite being immersed in one of the most diverse drag scenes in America, Roska's opportunities as an underage drag queen have been limited due to the bar- and nightclub-oriented culture common to the drag scene. Going forward, it's her biggest dream as a queen to further immerse herself in Chicagoan drag culture, as well as to make her own contribution to the sprawling drag scene back home in the Tri-Cities.

Perhaps that is what performing means to Roska. As her drag mother Sasha Sota once said to a 'baby' Roska, "Listen. Dragula or Rupaul's Drag Race should not be an end goal. (...) Because your drag exceeds more than just a tv show. It could be a journey or (...) a little stop, but it should not be an end goal." According to Roska, drag shouldn't be hierarchical, or defined by a king or queen at the top; rather, "we are the kings and the queens of drag. (...) Power to the performers; power to the kings, queens, and everything in-betweens."

Instead of drag being about getting the most attention or being the most pretty, it's about expressing a form of queer art and as a result, creating a sense of community in a binary society. For Roska, a young, up and coming queen from the Chicago drag scene, that is what drag is about - mustache, beard, and all.



Behind the Masc

"Trans bodies on trans bodies. I want to be visibly trans."

(From: 'Behind the Masc' interview with Sir Vix).

GRAYSON ADAMY... 17-20

SIR VIX... 21-24



BECOMING A KING IN URBAN MICHIGAN

Joshua Valentine interviews Grayson Adamy of Ann Arbor

"What do you mean 'women's dresses? These are my dresses, they're my clothes and I wear them." Quoting trans icon Eddie Izzard from an earlier interview of hers, Grayson Adamy, an Ann Arbor-based drag king, recalled his nexus from a queer child in a repressive Catholic home to a king in some of Michigan's diversest drag scenes. "At a very young age I knew what I was being taught in the church wasn't what I was seeing in reality." Aware of his trans identity from a very young age, it didn't take much longer for Grayson to also recognize the religious hypocrisy rampant in the sundown town he grew up in. Diagnosed with various disabilities throughout his childhood, Grayson was abused and gaslit about his diagnoses, establishing a growing need to sever relations in search of a more inclusive environment. Fortunately, moving to Oklahoma City shortly after high school and eventually settling in Ann Arbor helped to solidify Grayson's confidence in his identity as a proudly disabled trans man, not just for a change in surroundings, but also an introduction to a unique queer form of art: drag.

Growing up as one of the art kids in school - isolated to the bleachers during gym class - in part led to what is now Grayson's drag name, a pun of the popular medical drama "Grey's Anatomy". Discussing hypothetical stripper names during their usual period of producing Wattpad fanfics and Tumblr memes, the play on a then-common occurrence of his mother's affinity for neglect and medical soaps has stuck ever since."It's one of the few good pun names left, always gets a chuckle out of the seasoned queens. That's how you know it's good."

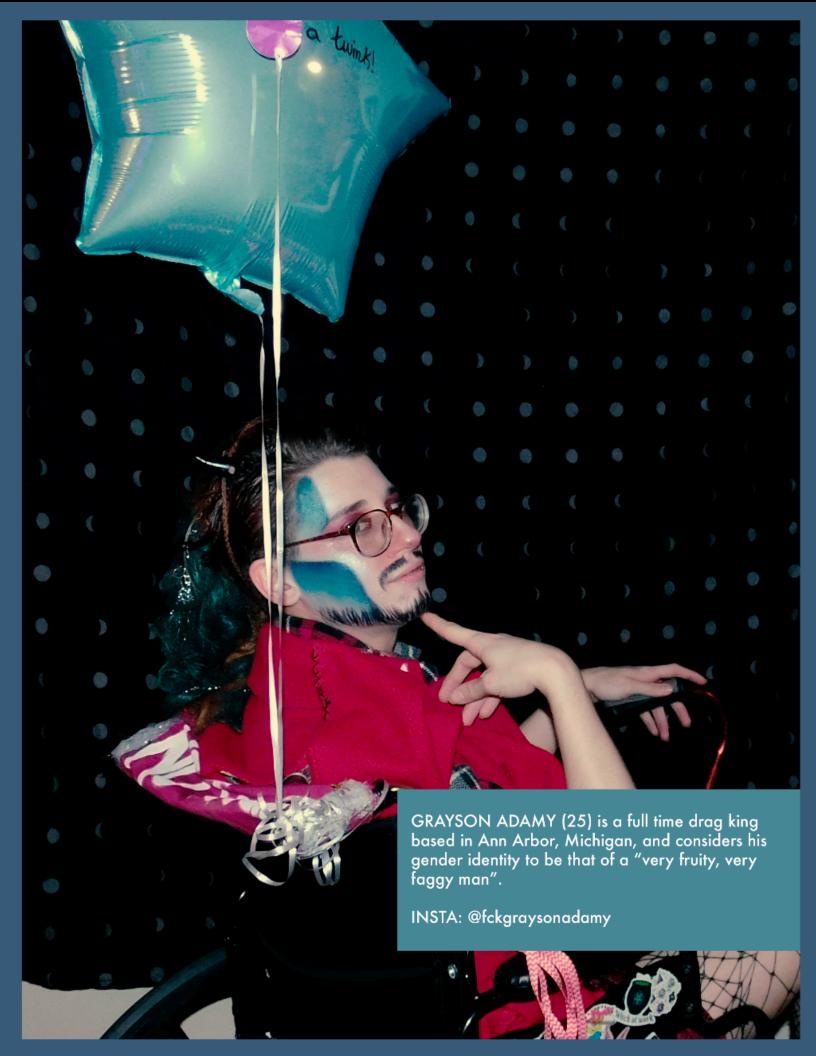
Moving to Oklahoma City at 18, solo except a dilapidated dolphin Pillow Pet and a dream of freedom, Grayson was immersed in the flourishing drag scene local to it, managing to come into full, transmasculine form and beginning to

pursue drag. Despite an intervention being initiated by Grayson's family upon news of his drag beginnings, Grayson forged ahead with his ambitions, winning at several pageants he's partook in and since estranging themselves from his abusive family, never looking back since.

Still, living as a disabled transmasc individual in urban Michigan comes with struggles separate to its rural counterpart, namely a lack of reliable transportation to and from venues where Grayson performs in drag full-time, as well as a lack of good pay and union representation. Queer spaces, equitable or not, are rapidly declining in the Midwest. Trips from Grayson's home to venues can take upwards of almost an hour, and returning from said places when shows stretch past midnight can also make accessing time-limited public transportation difficult. Stemming from local governments cash-strapped due to the recent COVID pandemic, Grayson still has managed to overcome the burden the virus has placed on both his means of transportation, as well as his vulnerable immune system. "Very, very few people wear a mask at shows these days. Every shift at a club is a risk to my health, but there's nothing I'd rather be doing with my life than spreading trans joy."

As testament to his resilience in spite of the troubles he's faced growing up, Grayson transforms his disabilities as assets to his performance style, rather than something to the detriment of it. A common denominator of these experiences is one of embodying joy. This embodiment comes ready with a walking cane-guitar and an inhaler-turned-saxophone. "I like to instill hope in my audiences, I like to make them laugh and like any good professional I can get them on my side.(...) by the end of it, the energy of the room still speaks for itself." Expect high-energy, theatrical performances, with a healthy dose of gender fluidity and sex appeal.

That fluidity extends to his real life as well. "I've settled on visibly fruity, visibly faggy man." He wears skirts now. His skirts.





DOING IT THEIR WAY: A KING'S RISE TO EXCELLENCE

Joshua Valentine interviews Sir Vix of Sacramento

Why am I the only person who thinks this is weird?" Is a question that a young, fashionable Sir Vix pondered during their formative years spent in Novato, California, which they described as "very small, very white." Dressing in a style evoking comparisons to a stereotypical prostitute, it was Sir Vix's flamboyance that protected them on their journey from an isolating Suburban culture to one of drag excellence in Northern California. "If you're loud enough and bold enough, everyone's looking at you. No one wants to do the bad thing (to you) while everyone's looking."

Raised by a school teacher mother and an auto mechanic father, Sir Vix's family made just enough money to live in this affluent community. Amidst the COVID Pandemic, this creative mixture of occupational talents would be later reprised as Sir Vix grew up and moved from substitute teaching full time to working in drag and burlesque, a seasonal kids' face painter, a drag/burlesque costume designer, a receptionist, and a private tutor. With drag-origins in Anime cosplay and burlesque, Vix had to make sure to keep their occupations in both public education and performing arts separate. "You can't have a lot of crossover." Once while working full time as a substitute teacher, Sir Vix was forced into an undesirable crossover with their life as a burlesque dancer when another performer outed Vix to their boss, leading to Vix being let go. Occurring as a result of Vix calling out said performer for misconduct toward multiple fellow performers, Vix was resolved about the outcome of calling them out. "I still get harassed for it, but I'm still proud I said something."

Naturally, their pride in advocacy seeps into their drag style, where advocacy is a common practice and their disabilities are reframed as assets rather than hindrances of their stage presence. "I like to let the people feel seen who don't feel seen." Positively transforming exclusionary narratives strongly characterizes Sir Vix's drag philosophy, as they continuously seek to cement the presence of trans, disabled, and non-binary performers in the queen-dominated drag scene, be it in the broader Sacramento region or elsewhere. Sir Vix accomplishes this through a variety of ways, including as a drag father of local kings such as Mondo Millions and Chico Stix. To a similar effect on a personal level, Vix achieves this philosophy simply by being themselves in their own transmasculine identity, stating, "If you're trying to pass, you're doing drag for straight people." Their drag name, a pun referencing the cervix typically found between the human vagina and uterus, reflects this fluid style well.

After years of working to expand the king population in the Sacramento drag scene through outreach and mentorship, Sir Vix still experiences the limitations of

being a drag king in a community straddled with infighting. When advocating for king performers at local venues predominantly queen-oriented, Vix was ultimately blacklisted, and prompted criticism from local drag queens. Undaunted, Sir Vix still continues to thrive as a drag-staple of the Sacramento scene, be it through being a performer, a drag father through his own House of Flamboyance, or an advocate for younger drag kings. "I feel like I've already accomplished all my big dreams. A lot of people want to do drag to get famous, and that sounds awful."



Beyond the Scene

"You can't be loud about systems and quiet about accountability."

(From 'Behind the Masc' interview with Sir Vix).

ROBERT GARCIA... 27-30



LEADING DRAG INTO A POST-COVID WORLD

Joshua Valentine interviews Robert Garcia of Las Vegas.

"The drag show must happen." That is what Robert Garcia thought while leading his school's LGBTQ+ Initiatives department. Embattled with an underfunded, leaderless department as an undergraduate student, then LGBTQ+ Scholar Coordinator Robert Garcia was determined to not let his community fade away as the pandemic shut down much of campus life.

While attending University of California, Merced as a sociology major, Robert became the de facto director and sole employee of the LGBTQ+ Initiatives department after the director of its former incarnation, Angela Baxter, stepped down due to funding being retracted as a result of the ensuing pandemic. He recalls Angela saying, "They basically took away everything I love (...) What I was hired for I'm basically not doing anymore." A coworker of his also left afterwards. Unrelenting, he forged ahead with a bold, ambitious plan to conduct a virtual, live streamed drag show on a relatively small budget.

With most of the budget dedicated to compensating the performers that would be participating from across California, including the San Francisco-based club Oasis, Robert had not much funding to spare in terms of facilitating the actual show. That meant buying tools such as a second iPad and a camera to help broadcast the virtual drag show. Paperwork was another hurdle to overcome in the path to facilitating the campus's first post-COVID show, culminating in a single, unprocessed form leaving the show temporarily blocked from occurring. Without it, the queens and kings participating in the virtual show (among them, Central California's Sasha Devaroe), wouldn't have been paid.

Fortunately, the show was able to occur according to plan, with queens and kings fully compensated, attracting upwards of 500 viewers and praise to Robert for the professional format of the livestream, with Robert remarking that technically and procedurally, it looked similar to the *Billboard Music Awards* ceremony. The following year, UC Merced had opened its campus back up to in-person facilities upon the waning spread of the COVID-19 virus, and Robert was encountered with another unique challenge: directing the facilitation of a drag show in a post-COVID world

Operating on a marginally larger budget, Robert was again able to succeed at facilitating a drag show on campus, this time hosting a live show to a packed lecture hall of students and UC staff, equipped with bubble machines, visuals, and a separate room dedicated to performers getting ready in (makeup, wigs, and all). From fear of no one showing up, to his own lively rendition of Jennifer Lopez's Dance Again, after the show, a queen part of a Central Valley-based drag group remarked to a sleepy Robert, "You made not only the audience feel special but you made us feel special." Thanking them, Robert fell back asleep on the floor of the lecture hall, two year-to-year drag shows successfully under his belt, and a bright, post-graduation outlook as a community organizer for a social justice organization awaiting him in Las Vegas. Both shows would not have been possible without the help of Robert's trusted friends and coworkers, Gisselle Reyes and Thea Sarino, among others.

While Robert might not display the same glitz and glamor as the performers he hosted - Robert even remarking at one point "I couldn't be a face because I was doing background work" - he still hopes to be instrumental in educating individuals about drag culture and helping support his fellow community members. "It's not all glitz and glamor, it's people fighting for their rights." And in that fight, drag queens and kings can rest assured they have a committed ally.



Drag on the map

"Drag queens are the celebrities of the gay community."

(From: 'Profiles in Pink' interview with Venus Nicole).

HONEY MAHOGANY... 33-36

ZACHARY CLAUSE... 37-40



HONEY MAHOGANY & SAN FRANCISCO IS A DRAG

Joshua Valentine interviews Honey Mahogany of San Francisco

"Sometimes I think I was a little too nice on Drag Race." Honey Mahogany, veteran drag queen of Season 5 of Rupaul's Drag Race, has recently given back to the San Francisco drag community local to her hometown as one of the leading organizers of the December event San Francisco is a Drag. With previous occupations spanning social work, District Director for California Assemblymember Matt Haney, Chair of the San Francisco Democratic Party, and co-owner of San Francisco's oldest LGBTQ-venue, the Stud Bar, Honey has combined her unique political and organizational prowess to lead 100 queens and kings into the vibrant streets of San Francisco. San Francisco is a Drag, supported by the Civic Joy Fund, was designed as part of a broader effort to bring community events to various neighborhoods throughout San Francisco.

Uniquely informed by her direction of events held where she is a venue-owner, Honey has been able to utilize both social media and in-person promotion (i.e. posters and flyers on flagpoles and community boards) to promote San Francisco is a Drag to as wide of an audience as possible, regardless of one's connection to the San Francisco drag scene. Spanning cultural hubs of East San Francisco such as the Castro and Hayes Valley, San Francisco is a Drag was successful in bringing out members of the San Francisco community for a fun, joy-filled extravaganza taking place across 2 days.

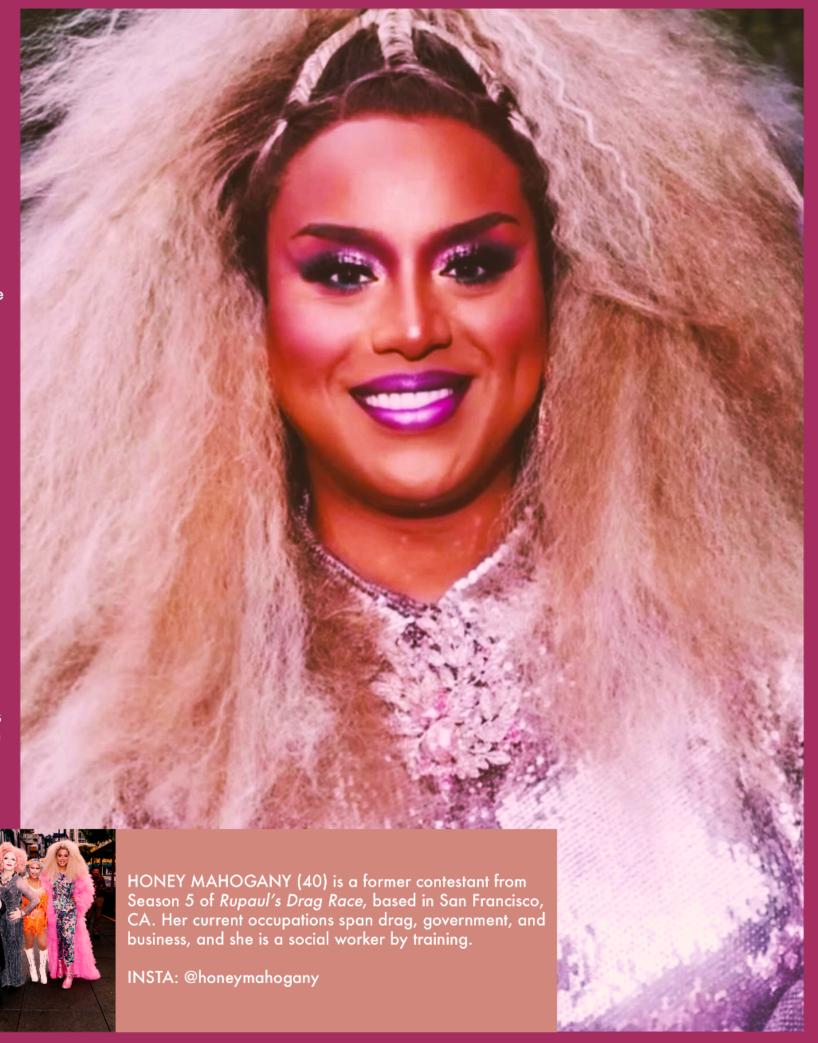
Her drag name, inspired by the two makeup shades closest to her skin tone, honey- and mahogany, also serves a double entendre meaning to reflect her strength and resilience as a drag queen in an era of increasing hostility from far-right politicians. Simultaneously, it reflects her fundamental kindness, and her proactive efforts to further enrich San Francisco culture in the vibrance of drag. "I don't know if the name has grown on me, (or) I've grown into the name (...) but I

think it has become a huge part of my identity."

During her time as a *Drag Race* contestant, Honey didn't understand the reality television dynamics underscoring the drama-fueled tone of *Rupaul's Drag Race*.

"I didn't engage in a lot of the drama and in fact I ended up diffusing a lot of the drama, which doesn't make for interesting TV." Regardless of conflicts between individual members of the drag community, it is important for us as a community to remain unified in opposition to hate and bigotry when there are attacks directed at the drag community from various dark corners.

Fortunately, 400 drag performances later, former *Drag Race* contestant Honey Mahogany's *San Francisco is a Drag* accomplished just that, while also entertaining and engaging members of the broader San Francisco community.





CAMP AND CLASS INFUSION: ZACHARY CLAUSE'S CHRISTMAS, AFTER-ALL

Joshua Valentine interviews Sherry-Duvall Covington of New York City.

"There's so much more variety of drag queens in New York City." Zachary Clause, also known as Sherry Duvall-Covington, is a drag regular at New York cabarets such as Pangea and Joe's Pub. Recently, he has extended his drag form in a blend of camp with mid-century nostalgia to create a unique Christmas special in the vein of throwback holiday television specials from The Carpenters and Judy Garland, for example. Informed by his background in theater arts, Clause has applied his over-the-top tact to create a holiday treat bending expectations of what a modern drag queen should be, be it by appearance, performance style, or just whatever comes out of his mouth on stage.

Past shows include campy plotlines spanning from an extraterrestrial lesbian love affair to an ill-fated voyage aboard a poop cruise in Is That All There Is?, Sherry Takes a Holiday, Sherry at a Funeral, and The Abduction(s) of Sherry Duvall-Covington. Christmas, After All, shown at New York's Pangea this past December, had a running narrative of a homicidal gay boy who murdered his parents for giving him a Bissell brand dustbuster instead of the Black And Decker one he demanded. By satirizing consumer culture, Clause manages to creatively produce a bright, festive atmosphere by poking fun at behaviors universally recognized by the American populace.

Christmas.. along with the rest of Clause's shows are directed by his husband, Reed Whitney, and performed in a cabaret, rather than the more common drag outlets such as night clubs and bars. "There's an older style of drag I wish would have a resurgence." In his opinion, drag has progressed past theatrical, avant-garde productions into a prettier style popularized on social media platforms such as TikTok. With this comes a somber realization for Zach that in becoming mainstream and broadly accepted by the masses, drag as an art form has lost its artistic edge. Describing the recent season of Drag Race, "It's all become a little too homogenous. [...] I feel like because it's so saturated now and because it's so sort of normalized, now there's like a certain formula you have to follow if you want to be recognized."

Mainstream or not, either by Zachary Clause or his drag alter ego, it is Clause's passion to carry on the traditions and styles of the queens who have inspired him, including Charles Bush, Charles Ludlam, and Joan Crawford, and hopefully can help viewers escape from the oversaturated drag market of today. By parodying American consumerism through a campy lens, a show starring Zachary Clause in any form is sure to make you laugh, and also rejoice in drag's unique niches. Fortunately, he has already begun preparing plans to make his Christmas, After All show an annual holiday outing.



ZACHARY CLAUSE (38) is a New York-based drag queen hailing from Philedelphia, PA. By day, he works at an ad agency, and by night, he's a part-time queen in local cabarets. When in drag, he performs under the Shelly Duvall-meets-pretentious-housewife moniker, Sherry Duvall-Covington.

INSTA: @zacharyclause

Drag in the arts

"(Creativity) gives you space to have an actual effect on the world around you, and that helps with a lot of depression, so: always do art."

(From 'Behind the Masc' interview with Sir Vix).

REVIEW OF RUNAWAY HUMANITY

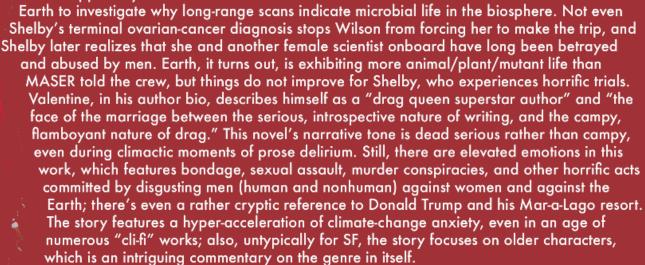
Pulled from Kirkus Reviews

An ailing human scientist on a Mars colony faces mental and physical horrors during an expedition to her supposedly desolate home planet in Valentine's SF novel.

In 2030, Earth's atmosphere is eroding, which leads to mass extinctions. The surviving remnant of humanity travels on spaceships to Mars, where they gradually dig into the red soil to escape deadly Martian radiation and maintain stifling, subterranean colonies. Married doctors Shelby and Drake Hilton are among the heroic pioneers of the Mars Administration of Space and Extraterrestrial Research. Now withered in their 60s in the

2060s, the still-prominent couple are ordered by MASER president
Alex Wilson on what seems

like a suicide mission: return to the supposedly dead



An often-gruesome speculative yarn in which male malevolence predominates.







Roska's makeup essential is..

RCMA No-Color Translucent Powder





"What is one makeup product that is essential to your drag style?"
"Don't."

-(From: 'Profiles in Pink' interview with Roska).



Venus's makeup essential is..

Morphe Setting Spray

Sir Vix's makeup essential is..

Ben Nye White Cream Makeup





Grayson Adamy's makeup essential is..

E.L.F. Matte Putty Primer

Edited & Designed by Joshua Valentine

