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## Q&A: TROY CAPLAN



In a monthly showcase, Troy Caplan from *Troy Boy Entertainment* has for a few months now been bringing drag to Guelph with *That's My Drag!* I talked to Troy ahead of April's iteration, *The Show Must Go On!*, happening in the eBar on Saturday April 25th at 7:00pm. The *Pride Edition* will follow on May 2nd and the 3rd annual *Mr and Miss Guelph Pride Pageant* will be Friday May 8th.

- Andrew

**How did you come to drag? Can you recall what your first show was? Do you feel like your own experience is common, and if so is there any advice you'd give to someone who's just taking an interest or just starting out?**

I first fell in love with the craft of drag at 19. I was new to going out to gay bars and events, and stumbled upon drag shows at Kitchener's Club Renaissance. My first drag show was a casual Thursday Night *All That Glitters Is Gold* show hosted by Legendary Miss Drew. My experience for a queer-identified individual is not at all uncommon. The majority of gay bars host weekly, sometimes nightly, drag events with some of Ontario's finest queens. A lot of heterosexuals usually end up at a drag show in support of a friend in the show, or supporting a gay friend in general. With *That's My Drag!* I am trying to break the stereotype that drag is just for gays.

For individuals starting to take an interest, I'd say enjoy the show, move past the fact that it is a man dressed as a woman. It's real raw live entertainment. For anyone interested in starting in drag, either as a queen or a king, believe in yourself! Also; Come see me ;)

**You're curating these eBar shows with performers from all over Ontario. Could you fill us in some of the performers you're bringing into Guelph? Any performers you'd really like to get on board?**

Right now I have a roster of 25 queens that I work with. Some are seen more often than others, but this does not mean they are my favourites, I have entertainers who come in from Oshawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Tri Cities, Brantford.

Victoria Parks is the host to *That's My Drag!* She has been a drag queen in the Kitchener area for 20 years and a good friend of mine for almost a decade. She is hilarious on the microphone and is, what we call in the industry, a well seasoned queen.

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**Nadia Diamond** – currently Miss Guelph Pride – has been performing for 10 years and has held almost every title in the 519 area. She is a consistent performer that constantly is playing with her look and costumes to ensure she is able to stay on par with some of the younger queens coming into the scene.

**Rachael Temptation** is a travelling show girl, best known for impersonations of Cher, Lady GaGa, Britney Spears just to name a few. Started off in Guelph - moved to Kitchener - and is now in Toronto. Rachael is an all around good queen. She makes the majority of her costumes and is forever trying new looks and music to evolve her own craft.

**Athena McQueen** is our Guelph native. She will be making a comeback appearance this April 25th show, after taking 6 months off. Athena has been performing for three years, but only consistently for two. I took Athena under my wing as a 'project queen'. When I first met Athena she was struggling to put herself together in a very critical industry. Since partnering, she has blossomed, probably one of my greatest accomplishments was helping her to get up and started. She is campy and fun and definitely a crowd favourite here in Guelph. You never know what she is going to bring to the stage.

My spotlight entertainers are generally big names in Toronto. Guelph doesn't yet understand the drag community, but Toronto does. I bring at least one of Toronto's biggest stars every month, working with big names like **Nikki Chin**, who was an international sensation within her first year of doing drag. Going to other countries like Japan, Bermuda, and all across America. She has entered prestige pageants in the states and has represented Canada well! **Xtacy Love** is a starlet originally from Hamilton making a big splash in the Toronto scene. She was **Crews & Tango's** Drag Race Star 2013 and is just stepping down as Miss Crews & Tangos this April. These are two of the most prestige titles you can have in Toronto, with first place prizes \$4500 worth of cash and gifts. And **Scarlett BoBo** is a circus freak. Stunning and beautiful, she plays with and eats fire, is trained in acrobatic silk tricks, sings live, produces music, so much more.

I could go on speaking about the entertainers for hours. With a roster of 25 queens I am slowly putting Guelph on the map in the industry, with other big names to come to Guelph in the near future!!

**More than a few booksellers are huge fans of RuPaul's *Drag Race*. I assume that if something's on TV it means that there's there's a healthy audience for it. Do you have a sense of how drag's place in culture has changed in the past, say, 20 years?**

Drag in the last 20 years has gone through drastic changes, which was needed. Even 20 years ago drag was a lot more frowned upon. Very underground and hidden. It was more a craft: men would dress in drag on a weekend, but come the week it would be hidden away. I'm sure some of the queens are still like that today. RuPaul has broken down so many doors for not even just drag queens but drag culture and gay culture. She helped take drag from the shadowed gay nightlife industry into mainstream. Now drag queens are everywhere: television, parades, sponsorship adds. There are countless pageants, awards, titles to be won. Drag queens can and do make a full healthy living off their craft. I have friends that can still tell you, even 10 years ago, drag queens were a huge target. Gay clubs even within my life time have been a huge target. Gay bashing, queen bashing, homophobia, transphobia. We as the queer community have come so far, but there is always reminders of how much further we need to go.

**Misconceptions or assumptions about what drag is, about what drag shows are, must run rampant. No doubt you might be a little tired of correcting people (or maybe "better informing people" is a better term) , but what would you say to someone who's maybe a bit hesitant about a drag show?**

Common misconception: NOT ALL DRAG QUEENS WANT TO BE WOMEN! In fact, most of them DO NOT want to be women. A lot of drag entertainers are exactly that! Entertainers! They live their lives like men and hit the stage as a woman.

Secondly: DRAG IS NOT JUST FOR QUEERS! I have just as many straight people in my life who enjoy the craft of drag as I do queers. And I know just as many queers who cant stand drag as I do heteros.

I'd encourage people to look past the fact that its a person dressed as the opposite sex.

Does it hit an interest when they perform, does your draw drop, do you cheer and holler, do the entertainers leaving you itching for more? It's all just entertainment! Give it a try! To the straight men: it does not make you gay to find a drag queen attractive. It means the drag queen is *really* good at what they do!

**Proceeds of your upcoming shows will be going to Guelph LGBTQ community. Do you have an idea what the shows themselves contribute to the community, or at least what you hope they'll contribute?**

I am blessed to bring a show like 'That's My Drag!' to the city of Guelph. I am born and raised here. Growing up queer, there was next to nothing in this city for me. I myself only found out about the [Guelph Pride](#) Committee three years ago, after being involved as a volunteer for both the Tri-Pride & Toronto Pride committees.

I hope that my shows bring people together. Not the gay community, not the straight community; my focus is the community at large. Yes, I make all of my events queer identified, not because it's exclusive to the queers, but because the queers don't have anything in this city targeted towards them. I truly hope that my show touches people, all people, whether it's as simple as making it queer identified for some, or putting a smile on an older generation's face. My show brings out such a wide spectrum of individuals, people between 19 and as old as 70 have walked through the doors. They all have two things in common: open minds and positive attitudes!

I feel having the Drag Show will help the queer community have a little bit more of a growing stance in the city. With more and more straight people coming each month, the drag show is helping for Guelph Pride & Out On The Shelf to be more visible. It's important for individuals to have a sense of belonging, and I feel the Drag show continues to be an element for that each and every month.

Highlight's From That's My Drag! 28/...



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