



## Guelph man making burlesque his business

Troy Bridgeman

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GUELPH —When Guelph entertainer Troy Caplan aka Troy Boy Parks started organizing drag queen performances for him and his friends at a local club in 2013 he had no idea it would transform into a growing business.

"It started off as a hobby that ended up blowing up into something a lot bigger," said Caplan. "Right now, I am in Guelph and we started in June going to Hamilton. I would like to branch out to London, Niagara and Toronto as well."

Caplan is the owner of Troy Boy Entertainment, a Guelph-based company that specializes in promoting drag and burlesque shows.

"In Guelph, the burlesque show is called Dazzling Dames Burlesque and it focuses on reviving the art form of burlesque," he said. "I work with about 12 burlesque girls right now and there are three gentlemen I hire as well every once and a while."

*Guelph burlesque entrepreneur Troy Caplan, aka Troy Boy Parks, owner of Troy Boy*

The drag shows are produced under the name "That's My Drag – The Show Must Go On" and feature five regular performers and a rotating cast of 25 visiting drag queens.

"I am new to performing in the drag shows," Caplan said. "I am not a drag queen. I am just an entertainer. My stage name is Troy Boy Parks. I do male pop artist songs and get a little look together and get up there and dance."

His objective is to provide professional, high-volume entertainment in a safe and inviting environment.

"My events are queer-identified just because the queer community of Guelph doesn't have a lot of places they can feel comfortable to go," Caplan said. "It is open to anybody with an open mind and a positive attitude."

The shows go on at the eBar in Guelph and at Steel Lounge in Hamilton monthly and bi-monthly. Specific dates and updates of casts and performances can be found on the Troy Boy Entertainment website and Facebook page.

Caplan was born in Guelph and grew up here with his large extended family.

He always loved dancing and performing but didn't anticipate the direction his passion would take him.

"I went to St. James Catholic High School," he said. "If you had told me when I was in high school that I would be dealing with drag and burlesque, I wouldn't have believed it."

After high school he considered a career in the beauty industry.

"I am a college drop-out. Twice," Caplan said. "I went to beauty school and I dropped out. I also went to Conestoga for retail operations management. I didn't technically drop out. I just got a job in the industry before I graduated."

He took dance lessons when he was young and when he isn't performing and promoting shows for Troy Boy Entertainment he works part-time as a ballroom dancing instructor for a Guelph ballroom dance studio.

When Caplan was 19, he was introduced to the local drag queen community through performer and promoter Bradley Hamacher aka Miss Drew.

"For six or seven years before I started doing things on my own, I would dabble in and help him with his show, "All That Glitters is Gold," every Thursday night at Club Renaissance in Kitchener."

When Caplan decided to start Troy Boy Entertainment he sought help from the Guelph and Wellington Business Enterprise Centre.

"I work with my business advisor there, Olga George-Cosh and she is helping me put together a business plan to make it a little more legit," Caplan said. "She is just a little angel sent to me. She keeps me on track and if I am struggling she goes out and does research for me as well."

Caplan said George-Cosh and the team at GWBEC have helped him grow the business and identify new markets.

"The queer community, in general, is my audience and, starting out, that was my primary target market and as I've grown my

target market has actually switched," he said. "It has become middle-aged women, believe it or not. Heterosexual, middle aged women just love themselves at the drag show."

He attributes the change in his audience to a slow but steady change in people's attitudes.

"I find we get more and more of the heterosexual community coming out to the show," Caplan said. "That is perfect because, like I said, I don't want to discriminate against anybody. I also feel by having these shows it is expanding a lot people's minds."

Troy Boy Entertainment

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