Title: Everything I Need to Know I Learned at Jacque's

By Russell Wright (aka Aliza Shapiro)

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1. "Pay the entry fee, and then pay for drinks."

Ok, name a drag queen!

Ru Paul! Lady Bunny! Dame Edna even. Or Mizery, Melinda, Sassy. This isn't hard.

Ok, now name a drag king!

"What's a drag king?" is more likely going to be your answer to this one. Boston has a burgeoning drag king scene. These boys are hot, sexy, and wild. Jump on the bandwagon and dump your gay dollars in a drag king's pants.

Disclaim(h)er: I don't know all there is to know about the history of drag kings in the world. Nor am I a definitive historian of drag king performance in Boston. I just hope to set the scene for you, maybe pique your interest.

In March of 1993 The Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston hosted a show, about cross dressing, called Dress Codes. Diane Torr (famed Drag King) led a workshop where she teaches women how to cross dress and pass as a man. Around this same time there were musical gender bending performances by the Adult Children Of Heterosexuals. "This was a very high-camp, sort of low budget Las Vegas-style performing outfit involving cross-dressing fags and dykes, highfemme, sleazy dancers.'

In 1994, after seeing drag performed in DC and SF, mostly by women of color, Mia Anderson created Drag Kings Sluts and Goddesses. "When I did the first performance there were no other drag performances being done by lesbian/bisexual women in this area. My impetus was merely entertainment. I wanted to see women of color being able to perform the way they wanted to be seen."

In 1997, we were lucky to see NYC veteran drag king, Dred a few times - OutWrite, Tryst Pride Party, the Hatch Shell. Dred was an inspiration to many drag kings performing now. Eve Alpern (of the Theater Offensive), one of the organizers who brought Dred to town for Action, a pride party for women of all colors in 1998 explains, "she's a totally different league of drag performer-her choreography and characterizations are extremely clever and well-developed. Her strength lies in the truly seamless way she moves from character to character and gender to gender revealing not just how slick (and sexy!) she is, but also how fluid gender

In the late 90's, El Gallo appeared - the creation of local comedian, Sandra Valls. In 1999 Kristen Porter's Dyke Night Productions started Drag King showcases and contests. Her, "amateur competitions have given aspiring kings an opportunity to strut their stuff in a supportive environment and hone their skills and talents," she says."

## 3. "It's expensive to look this cheap."

But it is promoters like Debbie Nicholson (aka Bruce Cutlass) who push the boundaries of the scene, kicking it out of the house (JP), forcing it to grow up and gain a wider audience. Nicholson started booking rock music at Jacque's with drag queens about 4 years ago. About a year and a half ago she started encouraging drag kings to perform there on Wednesday amateur nights where kings could learn from the queens as well as compete against each other. Soon she had enough performers to start doing regular shows at Fran's Place in Lynn. Nicholson's inspiration was from the film *Virgin Machine* (Monika Treut) in which "the scene of a drag king (Shelly Mars) 'jerking off' a beer bottle was so hot...". Nicholson now books music on the edge of punk/performance/drag at O'Brien's in Allston. Nicholson now books music on the edge of punk/performance/drag at O'Brien's in Allston.

Other promoters have done their part in bringing professional drag kings to a wider audience and expanding the local scene. In September of last year, Truth Serum produced a show with the sexy and political Mo B. Dick and the Men of Club Casanova, an international posse of Kings. Shapiro produced the show at the Garment District in Cambridge. "I've been promoting music and other events, straight and queer, for over 8 years. At some point the unwritten mission of Truth Serum became to bring performers and audiences of all kinds together. What better place to have a drag king show, full of costume changes and illusions, than a clothing store!" Recently, Truth Serum brought another famous drag king, Mr Murray Hill, to The Berwick Research Institute in Roxbury.

4. "It doesn't matter what toilet you use: always be polite."

Eve Alpern comments, "What I find striking (and enjoyable) is actually the differences in approach to drag performances within queer communities. In contrast to the beautiful but over-the-top glamour fantasy performed by our drag queen brothers and sisters, drag king culture seems to be much more about the actual act of becoming a wide array of real-life male caricatures. Often in drag king shows (amateur ones, anyway), performances are equally about the performer's own gender expression and exploration as they are about the audience's entertainment. Drag king shows end up being both amusing theater and vital catalysts for social change."

Boston is now home to group acts and individual kings. All the Kings Men have been performing regularly and have also been bringing kings to the Randolph Country Club. ATKM, with 4-8 performers, are super polished, have great costumes, and perform elaborate choreographed dance numbers to many genres of music. Another group, The Princesses of Porn with the Dukes of Dykedom, "perform erotic old school burlesque numbers with high femme and butch sensibilities." Mia Anderson's unique production company, Drag Kings, Sluts and Goddesses, creates fully scripted theatrical performances with women of color performing all the parts.

The independent performers seem to be moving toward creating one or multiple drag king persona/s which is what we see with the more famous kings out of NYC and San Francisco. Solo performers like Bruce Cutlass, Buzzknut, Spike, and Butch Daddy create quirky/punk/new wave personas for their drag. AJ/BamBam (an 18 year old high school student in real life) is just starting to develop a career as a drag king. Kim Airs of Grand Opening! has been "performing" (she calls him her alter ego) down/dirty, sleazy and rude guy, Leo DeGennaro, since 1995. Leo likes to frequent strip joints and on occasion helps Airs teach. And Heywood Wakefield takes on a persona of a recently divorced father and performs "your mother's favorite hits from your childhood" to help heal his broken heart.

5. "Buy drinks. It will make us look better."

It used to be that there would be one drag king event a year, usually at Pride, now they are at least monthly. Hopefully as the scene grows and there is more visibility for drag kings we will be finding each other, and new audiences, not losing each other in the fray.

## Pull quotes

"i find drag kings so f\*cking sexy! i LOVE a woman in a suit...i LOVE a woman packing...it is total eye candy for me... i really adore the lounge lizard type or big band, suave, suited, slow dancing, romantic stuff...it really is the gentleman that gets this girl EVERY time... all i can say is bring 'em on...more, more, more

" Frankie Cocktail another solo performer, says, "It's like being a rock star. It never sucks to have shrieking women stuffing dollar bills down your pants"

Side bar items:

Sites to get more info about local drag performances www.truthserum.org www.dykenight.com www.butchdykeboy.com www.djdee.com email: lesboguerrillas@hotmail.com

books of interest:

Female Masculinity by Judith Halberstam

The Drag King Book by Judith Halberstam and Del Lagrace Volcano