

bite me



The Issue with HAIR

Number 2 : The HAIR Issue

An issue with hair, the hairy issue... Your crowning glory, your bouffant. It shapes our identity and how the world perceives us. Luscious flowing locks, 80's chemical perms, Brazilian blow-wave, buzz-cut number 1,2,3 and dread-oh-dread... no hair? no problems!

The constant change and desire to manipulate and control hair is as old as the ages. The appearance of our hair is so important to us that the hair care industry is estimated to be worth \$58billion in 2015 alone – that's a lot of pots, potions, dyes, hairspray, shampoo, conditioners, gums and glues!

This issue explores all aspects of hair. Body hair, fake hair, wigs, weaves, beards, 'fros, eyebrows, moustaches, digital fur, medieval hair, animal hair, hair products, art hair, hair that looks like food, man hair, lady hair, no hair, hirsuteness and bunny hair.

Dead yet alive, and the tie that bonds all mammals, hair is a haughty, hilarious, heroic and horrific topic to explore.

Now it you will excuse me, *"waiter dear, there is a hair in my soup"*.

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Pippa Brooks	Stanislava Pinchuk
Cleo The Bunny	Kathryn Lefroy
Susanne Deeken	Max Olijnyk
Khrob Edmonds	Oriana Reich
Emily Eldridge	Nicole Rose
Josh Gardiner	Marlon Rueberg
Gasius	Studio Shoplifter
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‘To Hair is Human, to Wig Divine’

BY KATHRYN LEFROY

Changing your hair is one of the most fundamental ways to project individual transformation to those around you, and perhaps this is nowhere more apparent than in the world of professional Drag performers. Holotta Tymes and Stephanie Nicole le Dream are two of San Francisco’s most notable Drag Queen personalities. Sure they have plenty of shoes and gowns cluttering up their closets, but between them they’d probably have enough hair to keep an entire Florida retirement village in weaves for the next ten years. Why? Because no amount of fake boobs, hips or bottoms will make or break a Drag persona as fast as a wig can. “We can put on all the makeup in the world,” le Dream explains, “and we can shove a whole couch cushion into our tights to give us hips, but when you think of a beautiful woman, the first thing you look at is her hair.” Holotta Tymes agrees.

“Your hair is really your picture frame. Your hair finishes you off.”

For this reason, professional Drag performers spend many hours and many thousands of dollars on their hair. Hairpieces range from cheap off-the-shelf synthetic wigs, to full-head lace front wigs, which are made by hand-tying (usually) human hair to a sheer lace base. These give the illusion of a natural hairline, but each wig will set you back a few grand. Prior to the show, the wigs are set and then secured onto the performers head with either spirit gum or, if the hair is really heavy, super glue. It doesn’t sound like the most comfortable thing in the world – and apparently it isn’t.

“I usually layer two or three wigs at a time, so there’s lots of teasing, lots of hairspray and a lot of spirit gum to glue them all to my head,” le Dream says. “Wigs can give you headaches and cut into the skin on your head,” Holotta Tymes explains, “and it’s best to keep your hair really short underneath because getting the glue out of your hair after the show is way easier.”

According to le Dream, “the worst thing that can happen to a Drag Queen is losing your hair onstage.” In one recent show le Dream was performing as Rapunzel – complete with fifteen-foot braid – and her wig fell off. “I was upset, but what can you do? You have to keep going.” For Holotta, who specializes in celebrity impersonations, the most frustrating aspect is when a celebrity changes her hair dramatically. “When Celine Dion went short she only wore it for about three or four months before they started gluing tracks in so her hair would be longer for her shows, and I’d just bought, like, twenty-five short wigs! And I was screwed!”

There are no hard and fast rules that Drag has to be performed with a wig, but both Stephanie Nicole le Dream and Holotta Tymes agree that it often doesn’t have the same effect. “It’s much less sweaty when you’re not wearing a wig, but for me, I don’t quite feel right without one on,” le Dreams says. (Well, except maybe for the time she bleached her own short hair Miley-blonde and rode fellow drag queen Vicodonia around the audience like a Wrecking Ball.) “The wig really completes the character,”

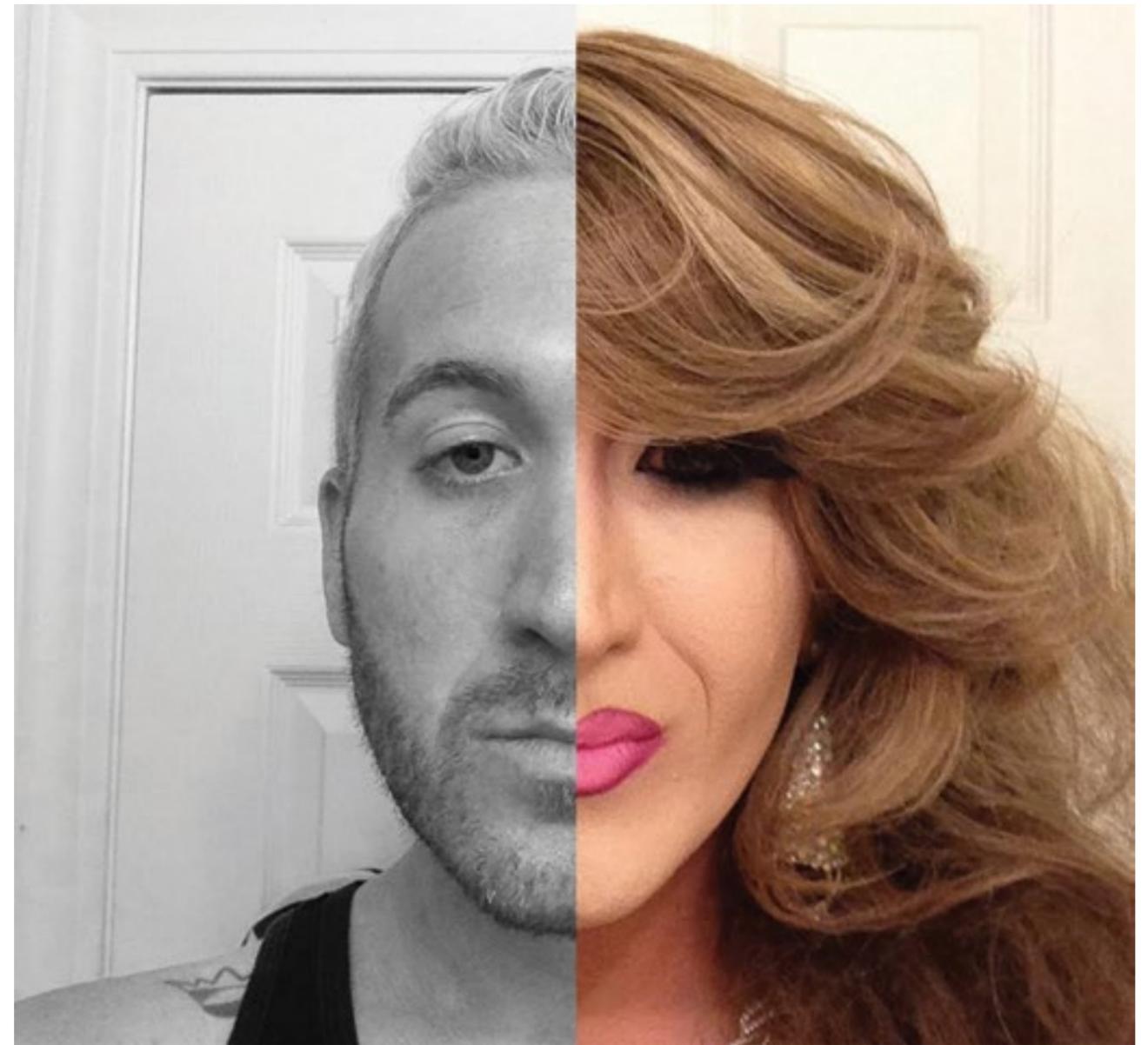


Photo by Jimmy Gale / Stephanie Nicole Le Dream

Holotta Tymes insists. “It’s so impressive when the hair goes on and it just brings everything together.” She recalls being backstage for a big celebrity impersonator show in Las Vegas and nervously watching a new colleague get ready. “Even when all her makeup was done I had no idea who she was meant to be. But then she slipped on the wig and I was like ‘Oh my God! It’s Shirley MacLaine!’” Just with the addition of the hair, the anxious newbie suddenly became her famous predecessor.

But the wig is much more than just a prop for aesthetic transformation – it’s a sort of psychological tool; the final element that enables these performers to quell their introverted male personalities and get out on the stage

as strong, powerful women. “I’m more of a homebody,” le Dream claims. “I like to work in my garden and I sew. I’m not so much of the club person, but when you’re out in drag, you kind of have to be. *You can’t just sit in the back and read Harry Potter... When I put on the wig I’m transformed – I carry myself differently.*” Holotta Tymes, who has been working as a Drag Queen for over twenty-five years and has performed in almost every major city in the US, still gets backstage dread before a show. “I just want to get [the show] over with... My male persona is much more of a shy person. I don’t like crowds. I huddle in a corner and observe.” But the minute she slips on a wig? “That’s the moment when I’m like ‘oh wow, there it is!’”

Many Drag performers endeavor to keep their personal and professional lives as separate as possible. Holotta Tymes clearly distinguishes between her male and Drag personalities and as soon as she's offstage, she strips herself of hair and makeup. She stores all of her costuming – including her collection of about 2,000 wigs – in a warehouse away from her home that she rarely lets anyone else see inside. For her, performing in drag pays the bills. “I love it, but it's also a way of making a living. It's like any other job. Just with a different uniform.”

Although le Dream tries to keep her drag and ‘boy’ personalities distinct, she has been surprised at the effect Stephanie has had on her male alter-ego, Jimmy, who works as a community activist for the San Francisco LGBT Center. “I have been HIV positive for the past six years, and being Stephanie Nicole le Dream I have been able to raise a lot more awareness. There are things that I would like to say as Jimmy that people don't necessarily pay attention to, but *when you go out there in six inch heels, three wigs, and a sequined gown, people pay attention.*” His work at the LGBT Center includes helping people get tested, as well as finding them the counseling and support they need. “People at the bars I perform at often know what my day job is and I'll often find myself sitting down and having long conversations about their sex lives – if it's a new diagnosis or a breakup.” Jimmy is always taken aback at how willing people are to open up to him when he's in character. He has also been astonished at the large female heterosexual following he's developed over his nine years of performing. “So many women want to talk to Stephanie about their relationships and their breakups and husbands and boyfriends. I guess it's like having girl talk. It's fun.” But for Jimmy too, the wigs and the sequins don't take over his life. “As soon as I get home all of my drag gets put in the garage. I don't want to look at it. I lock her away when I'm done. Stephanie is a big part of who I am but I don't want to be remembered for being a boy in a dress. I want to be remembered for making a difference to my community.”



Photo by Holotta Tymes

Drag queen or not, I think we can all learn something from these two seasoned professionals. If you are one of those millions of people who don't much like – but sometimes can't avoid – being the center of public attention, forget conventional wisdom of picturing the audience in their underpants.

Instead, try summoning your extroverted alter-ego by slipping into something slightly less comfortable and gluing on a wig.

Male Pattern Hairness

BY JOSH GARDINER
ILLUSTRATION BY
BEN THOMSON

It's in my ears
And in my nose
It's on the parts of me that no one goes

My neck a carpet
My belly button, a nest
It just keeps coming
Hey. God. This a test?

Tufts of fuzz on the small of my back
Short and curly tangles on butt, crack and sack
Big thick long ones out the middle of moles
Nobody can explain the meaning of those

This hair, my hair
Far out how it grows
Like a hanging garden
Underneath my clothes

Sure, follicles fall out
Let go like leaves from a tree
But the rate that they sprout
> than the rate they break free

Tell me why my toes need hairs
And why the hell can't my knuckles be bare?
These thatchy patches are everywhere

Think Mr Twit, Cousin Itt, or matted shower plug
Whatever you call this, this all-over rug

It's hirsute, it's tenacious
Persistent
Ungracious

You might laugh, and baldly
Say I'm 99 part chimpanzee
But hey, if you had hair like this?
You'd be plucking like me

