# Interview with Heaven Leigh

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Interviewer: Okay, you ready? All right. Let’s do this. Yep. When did you first hear about drag and what were your initial reactions to it?

Heaven Leigh: So I first heard about drag probably as a kid when, like, watching The Rocky Horror Picture Show, but like I don’t think I learned about it really until like later years of like high school when I stopped using like the word like tranny and transvestite, because that was like what was used in uh, ye old days. Obviously, I started getting into politics and stuff in high school.

Interviewer: But when did you start performing as a drag artist? And why did you start performing?

Heaven Leigh: About a year ago? I wanted to explore a different side of myself and the way that I express myself.

Interviewer: How did your family friends and other loved ones receive you becoming a drag artist?

Heaven Leigh: Friends and family that were like close to me, they were excited and supportive, other family members, not so much, but the ones that I keep close to here positive.

Interviewer: Where does your drag name come from Heaven Leigh?

Heaven Leigh: So, my mom went through multiple different stages of naming she had started originally with Danielle Jennifer. So, it would have been like Danny or like DJ for, for like shortened versions of the name. My grandma hated that because she already had a granddaughter of Andrea and the shortening Andy my grandma didn’t like the idea of having two granddaughters with boy names and the second one that my mom went through was Heaven Leigh from a book series that she read growing up and she was like the main character and it kind of plays off of like the masculine like “Lee” but also like, I have a, I have a lot of like, past with like religion and stuff. So, it’s kind of fun to play off of. If I’m going to play off myself. Might as well go all the way.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. There are a lot of terms for types and styles of drag, from drag queen, drag king to glamour queen, male impersonator, comedy queen, beauty queen, queer artist, bioqueen, and camp queen among others. Are there particular labels you would use to characterize your drag. And what kind of drag do you do? What’s like your main style?

Heaven Leigh : If I was going to use any labels, probably queer artist or drag king, if I was going all out it would be very showy. I mean labels. I think that they just like they help you be able to like, discuss what you’re trying to do and they kind of give you a like, a means of communication, but I also don’t think that I really have any attachment to any label

Interviewer: And so, does the type of drag you do affect your life as a drag artist? If not, that’s okay, if so how?

Heaven Leigh: I would think so because you do like different forms of makeup, and the style of clothing is different. Obviously, if you’re, if you see like a regular like what comes to mind when you think of a drag queen, you would see like the big like star makeup with, you know, big eyelashes and all that stuff. But I think you have to learn differently to do like, drag king, like, give yourself more masculine or hyper-masculinized features as opposed to hyper-feminized.

Interviewer: Right, okay. Do you consider your drag to be political why or why not?

Heaven Leigh: I would think so if, if I was going to say so I wouldn’t apply that for everybody, but I think that since the LGBT+ community is still persecuted to this day. I think it’s important to make statements using art, and even in like my other art forms. I like at least having like that political like underlying like freedom to express myself.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. Sweet. How do you identify in terms of your sex gender identity and gender expression out of drag?

Heaven Leigh: Out of drag, female would be the sex. Gender identity I go as, I would say that I am a woman, but like gender expressions, like I don’t really like care a whole lot. Sometimes I kind of like sway on the gender dimension. I would say some days I’m more masculine some days I’m more feminine. In the lesbian community we have terms for, for the ways that we express. Being futch would be very masculine, being very femme, being a very feminine lesbian. But, being like right in the middle is like butch and so like I kind of fall between futch and femme most days.

Interviewer: Okay, do you think drag has influenced your idea of gender?

Heaven Leigh: I think so. I think it’s allowed me to loosen the restrictions of like how I view people instead of having that stereotype in your head and holding back. The first thing that comes to mind always that, uh, “Is that a guy or is that a girl?” Like it’s just really doesn’t matter. You can always just refer to someone as ‘they’ until you know.

Interviewer: How has dragged impacted or changed you? Has drag impacted your confidence as a person when you are out of drag. If so how if you could go back in time as Heaven Leigh. What advice would you give her, in your younger self?

Heaven Leigh: Let’s take that step by step. So, like the first, first question.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. So how has drag impacted and changed you?

Heaven Leigh: How has drag impacted me, I think it’s made me more confident and in the way that I express myself with my clothes and shit, and I think that it’s opened up a lot of doors to like a new group of people and being able to, like, meet people like in the scene and hear their stories and hear and see how they, you know, they use drag to express themselves and kind of more of a positive, uplifting community that you just kind of carried on with you even when you leave the drag show.

Interviewer: Has drag impacted your confidence as a person when you’re not in drag?

Heaven Leigh: Somewhat I, I think it’s more of a like a fake it ‘till you make it type deal. I mean, obviously everybody has like bad days and good days for confidence. In general, I would say I’m in a much better place than I was even like a few years ago, although obviously there are daily struggles.

Interviewer: If you could go back in time as Heaven Leigh, what advice would Heaven Leigh give your younger self?

Heaven Leigh: You choose who gets to be in your inner circle and you don’t have to listen or care about other people’s opinions if you don’t want to and it’s all temporary anyway. You’re going to find other people who are going to bring you up and are going to be there for you. Also, please, for the love of God, no more bangs.

Interviewer: Oh man, that’s good. I’m curious if and how your social identities have impacted your experience of drag or vice versa. How drag has impacted your identities? Can you share about one or more of your social identities such as gender, race, class, age, or geography. Wow geography, that’s good. That’s going to be in my podcast

Heaven Leigh: Amazing

Interviewer: religion, size, sexuality, and disability, etc. and or the interaction of these special identities have impacted your experience of drag and or how drag has impacted your experience. I’m social identity. That is a lot.

Heaven Leigh: How has it impacted my experience of drag? My social identities, okay. For me, I guess I just I don’t, I don’t care so much. I, I, really feel like the like I’m closer to being androgynous than I was before, I think that I love realized a lot more things. Like I kind of realized like certain things about my body were like more so along the lines of body dysmorphia rather than “oh, I don’t like I just don’t like this”. Like boobs. I, like, hate my boobs. Like I’ve always just hated that like I am like and it took me a long time but realizing like I’m talking to other people, especially those who do play with like gender and stuff. Like I want to get like a binder and stuff and possibly like help me, you know, be more of myself to be more comfortable in my own skin. I mean, I think it’s easy for me. It’s more easy for me than it is for like many others in the drag community. I think obviously minorities have it harder and trans people have it much harder because there’s this kind of like, even though drag is becoming more accepted as an idea. Yeah. It’s kind of hard to think about like what falls into that category and what doesn’t instead of just like opening them up to everybody. So, I still think that they’re still race issues. I think there’s definitely still like, it’s sort of a gay man’s world kind of still, and for like drag queens of being the most popular thing. So, I think that there’s definitely still a lot of a lot of issues. Yeah. Yeah still a good experience.

Interviewer: How do you define drag?

Heaven Leigh: I think drag is a play of expression. I think it’s an art form that anybody can do and it’s kind of like a sharing experience of art. And in the way that masculinity and femininity and gender roles are.

Interviewer: What do you think the purpose of drag is?

Heaven Leigh: I think the purpose is to free oneself a little bit. It’s, it can be many things for many different people. It could be their way to get like a performance out just have fun or you know, connect with other people who they wouldn’t normally connect with and kind of create a community where people can feel safe and have fun. At the same time enjoy political statements, I guess but like without having to take it so seriously.

Interviewer: Do you think drag is sexual why or why not?

Heaven Leigh: I think drag can be sexual. Obviously, it’s up to the drag artist on whether or not they want to display themselves in it in a sexual way, but I don’t find bodies in and of themselves to just like be sexual as if that’s like, their purpose. I think it’s more about like being comfortable with your body and like being able to just like, especially like when other drag artist like strip and like, everybody is hootin' and hollerin'. I think it’s like it’s more of like just cheering somebody on for like exposing themselves and not and not having to cover up so much and feel ashamed of their bodies.

Interviewer: That was a really good point. How do you feel about RuPaul’s Drag Race?

Heaven Leigh: Yeah. Now that I’ve started watching it. I think it’s a fun way to normalize drag and I think that since drag, RuPaul’s Drag Race, has become popular. I think you find a lot more people like talking about it and it spread all across social media and it brought out more issues in the LGBT community. And I’m sorry, I think it’s like I think it shed a lot of light on it. But I also think as I got popular people are always just like drawn more to like the extreme dramatics of reality TV. It’s heavily like fake and for show and all that but it’s also a way to get people talking and interested.

Interviewer: If you could change one thing about the drag about drag, the drag scene, or the drag community, what would it be?

Heaven Leigh: Definitely the bias against bioqueens and trans people in the community. Again, I think that there’s a lot of, even in the LGBT community, like it’s very difficult for anybody who’s not a white gay man to express themselves or be different because a lot of people only get to see the white gay men or see lesbians has like sexually objectified highly like porn and stuff. Like that’s really all that you see. You don’t get to see her a lot of other people just living their lives without having to be sexual object. So, I think that if I could change it, I would get rid of like all the stigmas and all the rules, except no straights. It’s very frustrating, the straights right now, but obviously you’re still inviting to still, come hang out with you. Got it. You can’t be like disrespectful. I just think that there’s so much like disrespect and hate in the community still. Yeah that it just needs to chill out.

Interviewer: Do you think that people have misconceptions about drag like where it comes from or what do you think would help change that?

Heaven Leigh: Sure, I think there’s lots of misconceptions. I think since that since RuPaul’s has become this big thing and just you only really get to see those queens a lot, it’s, a lot of times it really is thought of only being a gay man dressing up as a woman, you know. So it’s and it’s not so much of an art form, I guess people just don’t really see that, people think it’s like a joke really and still like to kind of… That’s like that’s a what’s that fucking term that I’ve heard lately, trap? Where they’ll, it’ll be like a man who dresses up like a woman and what does the makeup and whatever and then like, I don’t like, he’s like just chilling being himself doing his own thing. People call him The Trap, it’s like, oh, yeah, he has a penis between his legs. So obviously that’s not a hot lady and I can’t believe you made me call her hot, you know, so it’s like yeah.

Interviewer: I know you’re talking about now.

Heaven Leigh: God what’s his name? The kid that does makeup.

Interviewer: James Charles?

Heaven Leigh: Yeah, James Charles so, like people call him a trap because sometimes it can like look very like feminine. So it’s like it’s very frustrating because that’s very horrendous for like in that really puts us back for like trans rights is you know, like trans people shouldn’t even have to like, pass as their gender for you to see them as their gender. So it’s, it just it feels very binary sometimes. Yeah.

Interviewer: If you could choose one thing you want people to know about or learn about drag, what would it be?

Heaven Leigh: I think people should do like this more often where you just you open up your eyes to a lot of people who are actually like involved in it like not such like big name artists like you can see on RuPaul’s and just not take that as face value. Like oh, yeah, that’s drag and really like explore the scene a little bit and kind of open up your boundaries to like, I could go and go to a drag club, drag club party or whatever just kind of experience it for self and not and not like take it so much as like this is my experience this because one experience enhances all drag like that’s…

Interviewer: you think people need to look at the whole picture. Not just what they’ve seen on TV.

Heaven Leigh: Yeah. It’s so much, there’s, like I say about like everything, there’s so much like more gray area than like what you would see if you… really just kind of have to accept that you don’t know everything and what you’ve heard could be wrong and that you need to work on yourself while you’re trying to learn about other things and other cultures because I think drag really is like its own culture really that, that’s not just based on where you’re from or what you look like, but it’s, its, something entirely different and almost undefinable because the LGBT community is really only just starting to take ahold in society become popular.

Interviewer: Great. Well, thank you for answering all these questions. You did great. I loved hearing your insight.