

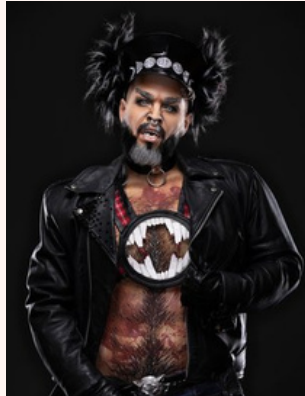
HISTORY OF DRAG



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Drag Pay Gap

As drag was brought to the mainstream, it was largely dominated by gay cis-white men. There is a pay gap in the drag world with cis-white male drag performers being booked for more gigs, receiving more tips, and a higher wage. This pay gap exists across all skill and experience levels.



Landon Cider



Sin Wai Kin

Drag is for EVERYONE!

With the popularization of RuPaul's Drag Race there has been a push for some in the queer community to be more inclusive, and to remember the roots of exploring identities and challenging gender norms. It is important to remember that anyone can perform in drag regardless of sex, gender expression, or even sexuality. It is also important to remember the subversive roots of marginalized communities defying laws to create spaces for them to express themselves. Gender norms affect everyone in society and drag should be a place where anyone can explore!

Ancient cross-dressing

Cross-dressing is a phenomenon that can be found in various ancient cultures around the world. References are found in religious mythology, literature, and it was performed in many cultural and religious practices.



William Dorsey Swann

An African-American born into slavery, the first person in the United States to lead a gay resistance group and the first known person to self-identify as a "queen of drag." William would host drag balls in Washington DC during the 1880s and 1890s. These balls featured a "cake-walk" dance competition. A dance carried over from enslaved people on Southern plantations, where couples executed walking steps and figures that, according to some, were a mimicry of the white man's manners and attitude. The winner would be crowned "queen of the ball".

William and other party goers were arrested in police raids numerous times, including a raid on his birthday where a reporter noted he was "arrayed in a gorgeous dress of cream-coloured satin". The balls, however, continued at "The House of Swann" and you can still see a similar format in today's ballroom culture with houses, house mothers, and queens doing competitive walking dances.

Vaudeville Drag Performances

This gender-bending theatre featuring cross-dressing performers was popular from the 1900s - 1930s. At this time strict gender norms were enforced societally, but through performance, individuals were able to express their gender identities and challenge societal norms often through the medium of comedy, music, and dance. Vaudeville featured both female and male impersonators.



Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance was an African-American cultural revival during the 1920s and 1930s. This time period saw a rise in popularity and visibility of drag balls. In the words of scholar Henry Louis Gates, the Harlem Renaissance was "surely as gay as it was Black." Drag ball culture was heavily influenced by Black, Latinx, gay men, and transgender women.

Drag Relationships

Drag isn't only a creative outlet for individuals to express themselves and explore their identities further, but also an artistic space for queer people to support and empower one another.

Drag families are groups of drag performers who socialize, support, and educate each other. Typically there is a more experienced and skilled performer known as the 'mother' or 'father' who will take newer performers as 'children' and help them learn and grow.

Most people who compete in balls do so as part of a "house"; a group of friends who become chosen family, often living together in a safe and supportive environment, where many may be estranged from biological family.

Drag pageantry

Drag pageants first started in 1959, thanks in large part to US drag queen Flawless Sabrina. These annual pageants were for drag queens, and trans women, modelled after traditional beauty pageants for cis-women. We wouldn't see the incorporation of drag kings into the pageant world until the 1990s.

Club Kids

Club Kids were an LGBT sub-culture that emerged in the 1980s in New York City and later London. "The Club Kids reinvented the do-it-yourself spirit of punk rock and incorporated sci-fi and the circus to create a new and exciting scene," claimed prominent club kid Ernie Glam. Playing with gender and sexuality was a large part of the culture. RuPaul came up in the club kid era.

RuPaul

RuPaul's early persona was heavily influenced by Black trans sex workers and the club kid era, but in the 1990s she shifted to a high-end "glamazon" figure that was more profitable and catapulted her into the mainstream. By the mid-1990s RuPaul had a guest spot on late night talk shows, a MAC Cosmetics campaign, a record deal, and appeared in small movie roles. In 2009, the first season of RuPaul's Drag Race aired on Logo TV. Now there are multiple spin-offs and drag franchises around the world. RuPaul has catapulted drag to the mainstream like never before, but it hasn't been without controversy, such as the early refusal to allow trans drag queens, and excluding drag kings from participation.



The Boulet Brothers' Dragula

The Boulet Brothers created their own drag competition show which originally aired on Youtube in 2016. The show encourages different styles of drag that some may see as 'weird' or 'unconventional' keeping it rooted in drag's non-conformist origins. Dragula has been inclusive of all gender expressions. It was the first televised show in North America to feature a drag king, and AFAB drag queen.