What's the deal with drag? [1]

Dear Alice,

I have a friend who recently came out of the closet, and now he's very involved in his college GLSBT (not sure if I have the letters right) community. My question is this: He has now, as a matter of pride and fun, I think, become involved in drag shows. He looks pretty good as a woman, if I do say so, but I just don't get it. What's the point of drag? Why do gay men do it? It's especially confusing for me because I don't hear of lesbian women dressing up as men, or at least not as much, and it's not a "spectacle" like drag shows are. I'm just confused? what exactly is drag FOR?

Wondering

Answer

Dear Wondering,

The act of dressing in the clothing of another gender for performance, referred to as "drag," has occurred throughout history and is found in different cultures throughout the world. Drag Queens are men who dress and perform in womanly garb often using exaggerated, over-the-top mannerisms. Drag Kings are women who dress and perform using exaggerated masculine mannerisms and garb. Entertainers, such as Milton Berle, would dress in drag, as did Marlene Dietrich and Katherine Hepburn. Andre Charles, also known as Ru Paul, is one of the most famous and recognizable drag queens these days.

People, regardless of gender and sexual orientation, dress in drag at various times for many reasons. Some are making a political comment on gender roles. Others express the freedom that taking on another persona gives. Still others see their performance as a form of entertainment for themselves as well as for an audience. Some professional or semi-professional Drag Queens and Kings take their performances seriously and prefer to be referred to by their stage name and the corresponding pronouns ("she" for Drag Queens, "he" for Drag Kings) while in drag. And some just dress in drag, as you mention in your question, because it's fun.

While your friend may be a gay man who performs as a Drag Queen, the act of performing in drag does not indicate sexual orientation or gender identity. Your friend may have his own specific ideas and reasons for dressing in drag. The next time you hang out with him, tell him how good you think he looks in drag, and see if he is open to talking about it. Then you can open a conversation and perhaps learn more about your friend, as well as yourself. Who
knows? You both might be performing a torch song duet before long!

Alice!
Category:
Sexual & Reproductive Health [2]
Sexual Variety [3]

Related questions

My hookup didn't say she was trans*
Understanding cross-dressing
Gay male in straight female's body?
My boyfriend likes to wear women's underwear

Published date:
Nov 05, 2004
Last reviewed on:
Jul 29, 2015

Source URL: http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/whats-deal-drag#comment-0
Links