

FEEL YOUR FANTASY

P.W.Y.C.
VOLUME 1



HOW TO RUN YOUR OWN
RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE FANTASY LEAGUE

EVERYTHING
I DO
I DO IT
FOR RU

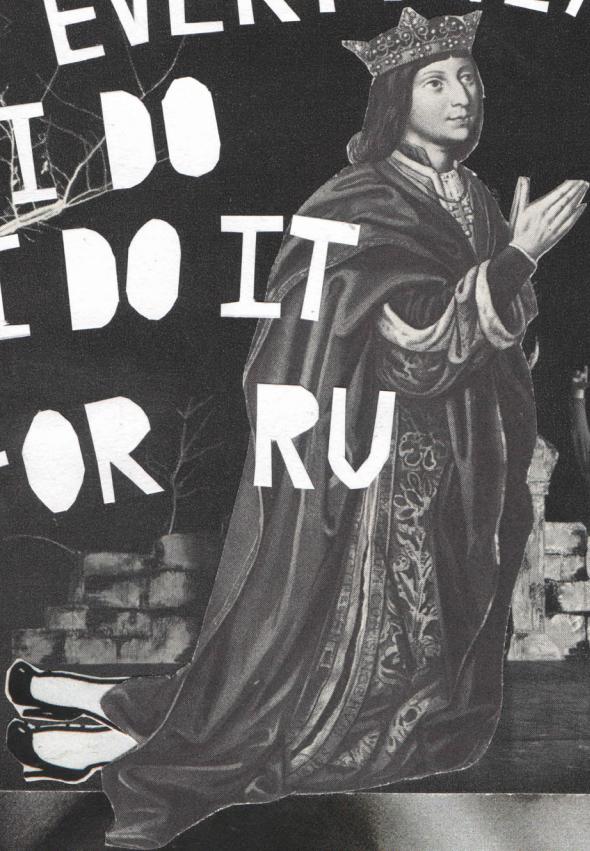






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**BE FIERCE
GAY FAMILIES
FOR RU**

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We totally mopped our visual style from Trans Zine, the legendary Toronto-based '90s zine. Go give it a read at the Toronto Zine Library (292 Brunswick Avenue). Special thanks to the TZL, too!



WELCOME TO THE FANDOM, SQUIRREL FRIENDS.

I founded our fantasy league in 2014, right before season 6 of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Coincidentally, that season was something of a turning point for the show. It was the first time *Drag Race* was cracking the gay glass ceiling of mainstream culture.

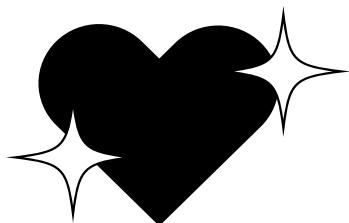
In 2014 *Drag Race* was suddenly everywhere – or at least it seemed that way. That year's winner, Bianca, was the first to truly break through, like RuPaul long before her, by filling theatres around the world with her comedy tours and starring in the first tentpole drag film since Ru was making movies in the '90s, *Hurricane Bianca*.



League). I rounded up a handful of fellow superfans from disparate friend groups and demanded they choose a roster of girls in our first-ever RPDR fantasy draft.

In the three years since then, our league of relative strangers has forged new friendships – and friendly rivalries. As Jaime explains later in this zine, watching *Drag Race* is a communal experience, and our league has become

While *Drag Race* was exploding as a phenomenon, our league began in earnest as an insular world: a weekly email chain filled with recaps, GIFs, and shady remarks. The inspiration came from an unlikely place: the ultra-masculine world of fantasy sports (or at least what I knew of it from teevee's *The*



a little community. We gather to watch the show at gay bars around Toronto and spend the on-season trading opinions and predictions in anticipation of each episode.

With this zine, we want to invite you into our world and expand our little community by inviting fellow fans into the fold. In these pages, you'll find all the tools to run your own league, including our scoring system. As it happens, our

league is filled with clever, sickeningly creative writers, designers and illustrators, and I tapped all of their talents to share our collective love for RPDR.

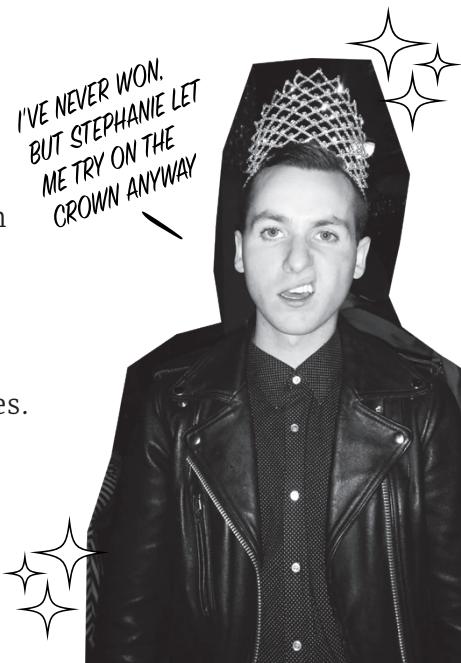
Alongside the fantasy league guide, you'll find essays and articles about our experiences watching the show, participating in the *Drag Race* fandom, and exploring the world of drag outside the show.

It's our hope you get lost in our essays, get drunk on our cocktail recipes, and claw your friends to a draggy death with your press-on nails, fighting for your own league's crown.

Welcome to the world of fantasy drag racing, hun-ties. Start your engines.

xoxoxoxoxokittens,

R



RUSS MARTIN
HBIC, FEEL YOUR FANTASY PRESENTS



FEEL YOUR FANTASY PRESENTS

HOW TO RUN

**YOUR OWN
LEAGUE**



• C'MON BOSSY QUEENS! START YOUR ENGINES •

(AND EVERYONE ELSE'S)

The first thing every league needs is a **HBIC** – head bitch in charge. Every friend group has a bossy queen who fancies themselves Queen Bee, and s/he/they will be essential to running your league.

The HBIC is one part commissioner, one part referee. (We don't know the first thing about sports, but we're pretty sure those are the right metaphors.) They'll send weekly emails, letting all the Racers know their weekly score and where they stand in the rankings.

The sassier, the better. The more anal, too! Do you see where we're going with this?



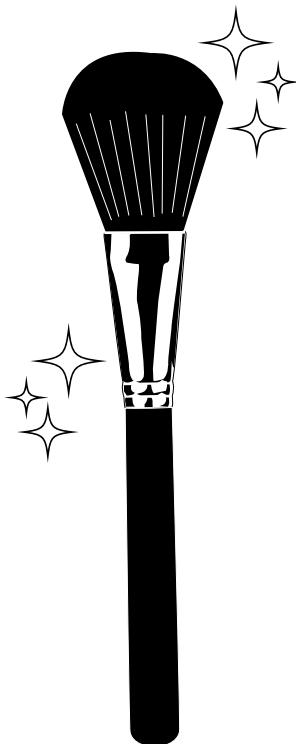
1. PICK YOUR PRETTIES



First things first: choosing your roster of Ru Girls

A typical season of RPDR has 12 queens. Each Racer must choose 6, plus an alternate, in case all 6 of their picks sashay away 6 weeks in a row. Be careful as you pick your roster! Don't fuck it up.

The *Meet The Queens* special is your friend. Drafts should take place following *Meet The Queens*, so each Racer can make informed choices. The RPDR subreddit is also full of info on the new contestants each season – plus potential spoilers, and plenty of Ruby Woo red herrings. Mine it as you choose.



Ambitious HBICs can even send out starter packs of useful info about all the girls, or share cast introductions from YouTube.

Get ambitious as you like with running your draft. For regular seasons, we let everyone pick 6 queens, no questions asked. But for All Stars Season 2, we developed a much more complicated – and convoluted – system in which once a contestant was chosen 3 times, she was off the market.

If you want help hammering out rules for a proper draft, ask your straight cousin who runs a fantasy football league. (Or you can email us at FeelYourFantasyPresents@gmail.com. We're helpful queens!)

2. HOW TO SCORE

(Get your mind out of the gutter, we're not talking about trade)

Once all of your Racers have their rosters locked in, familiarize yourself with The Scoring System.

We've come up with our own Scoring System, which you'll find out about soon enough. (Seriously, calm those engines, it's coming). It's totally malleable: take what you need, then add in whatever new points you like. As the show changes each season, you'll want to adapt the points system, too.



THE SCORING SYSTEM

On the next page is your guide to scoring the competing queens and your league members. Follow the instructions outlined on the following pages, using this as your guide for awarding points after watching each episode.

SEASON POINTS

+5 – TARGET ON HER BACK

Your queen wins the very first challenge

+4 – DRAG IDOL

Your queen wins a maxi challenge

+2 – AND THE FIRST RUNNER UP IS...

Your queen wins a mini challenge

+2 – RAG TO SWAG

Your queen wins a prize from an absurd URL, like *ALandCHUCK.travel*

-1 – PICKED LAST IN GYM CLASS

Your queen is picked last for a challenge

-2 – TOTAL BOTTOM

Your queen is in the bottom

-4 – HOME TEAM

Your queen sashays away

-5 – POOR TUCK, PORKCHOP!

Your queen goes home the first week



BONUS POINTS

+5 – SNATCH BONUS

Your queen wins the Snatch Game

+5 – THE SHANGELA LAQUIFA WADLEY

Your queen makes an appearance on a later episode after getting kicked off

+2 – DR. IN THE HOUSE?

Your queen is the first to require medical attention

+2 – THE HEATHER

Your queen joins a clique worthy of the Heathers



+2 — GOLDEN SHOWER

Your queen throws a drink

+1 — HER LIPS ARE SEALED

Your queen reveals a segment-worthy secret

-1 — WEAVELESS

Your queen loses her wig on the runway and that bitch didn't toss it

-1 — ONE TRICK PONY

*Your queen is accused of having just one look by the judges
(-2 if they accuse her twice, -3 three times)*

-2 — THE BOOGER

A prettier set of queens decides your queen is a booger

-3 — UNTUCKED

Your queen is called out for not tucking by the judges

-3 — SHADY SHADOWS

Your queen is called out for her 5 o'clock shadow by the judges

-X — THE WILLAM

Your queen quits the show or is disqualified and leaves (X = The week number the queen leaves)

THE FINALS



+4 — RU'S INNER CIRCLE

Your queen makes the final 3

+4 — THE SANDRA BULLOCK

Your queen is named Miss Congeniality

+5 — WINNER, BABY!

Your queen snatches the crown!



2. HOW TO SCORE ✨

(continued)

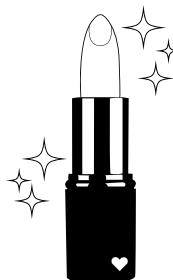
This is how scoring goes down: the HBIC watches the show and takes notes, marking down each time one of the contestants does something that earns – or loses – points. If a queen is called out for her five o'clock shadow (Willam!), that's -3 points. If they win the Snatch Game, that's +5 points.

At the end of the episode, tally up the points and rank all of the contestants.

TIP: IF YOU'RE WATCHING AT THE BAR WITH FRIENDS, CONSIDER A SOBER RE-WATCH TO PROPERLY COUNT POINTS THE NEXT DAY

Here's what our score card looked like for week 1 of season 8:

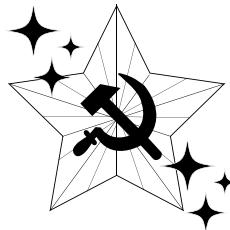
- **Kim Chi +11** (+4 Drag Idol, +5 Target On Their Back, +2 Rag To Swag)
- Acid Betty
- Bob The Drag Queen
- Chi Chi DeVayne
- Cynthia Lee Fontaine
- Dax ExclamationPoint
- Naomi Smalls
- Robbie Turner
- **Derrick Berry -1** (-1 One Trick Pony)
- **Laila McQueen -2** (-2 Total Bottom)
- **Naysha Lopez Lopez -6** (-2 Total Bottom, -4 Home Team)



Once you figure out how many points each queen earned during the episode, consult your legend to figure out how all of your racers did. If it helps, write out a cheat sheet,

like this:

- Kim Chi +11
- Derrick Berry -1
- Laila McQueen -2
- Nayasha Lopez -6



Use that as your guide to ranking your league members. Check each member's roster and award – or snatch away! – points based on which girls they chose.

Let's illustrate it, using the sample roster below. (It was mine!)

Russ's Roster:

- Acid Betty
 - Kim Chi
 - Thorgy Thor
 - Naomi Smalls
 - Bob The Drag Queen
 - Dax ExclamationPoint
- Alternate:* Derrick Barry



The only queen to score points on Russ's roster is Kim Chi, so for the week, you'd mark down:

Russ +11 (+11 Kim Chi)

Rinse and repeat for each Racer.

Then, presto! You have your rankings. Each week, you'll update the ranking, adding or subtracting points based on how the queens perform.

If, in week 2, Bob The Drag Queen gained 8 points and Acid Betty lost 3 points, you'd update the rankings like so:

Russ +16 (+8 Bob The Drag Queen, -3 Acid Betty)

Russ's total score for the week is +5 – add that on to the cumulative total for a running score of +16. Get it? Good!

If you're an Excel wiz, you can probably create a spreadsheet to do the math for you, but a pen and paper will do the trick.

Once you have your weekly rankings, send them out to your league. This is not a "Don't be shady, be a lady" sitch. Be an evil queen! Get nasty! Tell the losers in your league they're total boogers. *The library is open.*



A NOTE ON THE POINTS SYSTEM

Fantasy scoring is totally subjective. Like drag, it's an art, not a science.

Maybe you're a very serious queen, a total numbers girl, and want to judge your friends on how well they can spot a true winner. We went the more irreverent route: we assign points for totally absurd things, because it's a totally absurd show we're obsessed with.

Take the system we've created and make it your own. Jack the points up or down, and come up with totally new reasons to award points and snatch them away.

3. THE FINAL LAP

You've done your drag math and you have a winner, baby! What now?

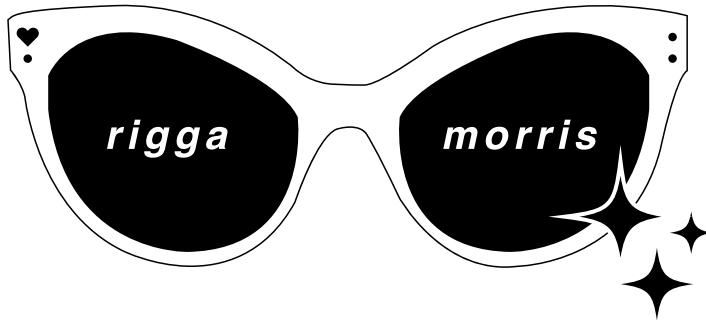
Round up your squirrel friends and head out to a finale party at the closest gay bar, of course. Your HBIC should keep the league winner secret under wraps until the big Ru-veal!

But first, you need a crown. If you're a queen on a budget, Dollarama's the way to go. It usually has Disney princess crowns you can cover with extra rhinestones from the craft aisle. Even better: pick up a crown on Pageantsupplier.com, where all the JonBenéts get their wares.

That's mother'tucking it! Spread your fantasy wings and *FLY FLY FLY*!

Have fun out there, hunties.

xoxoxoxoxoxokittens
Feel Your Fantasy Presents



THE FINE PRINT



For all those bossy queens who are rules girls, we've rounded up an exhaustive list of answers to your "But what if..." questions. If you have any chill, you won't need to read the fine print. But here you are, so read ahead, Taylor.

- When there's a tie and 2 queens win, award points to both of them. They're winners, baby!
- When two queens are sent home, take points away from both of them. Or follow this special rule: double negative points for a double sashay. Because if you're *both* told to sashay away, Ru's had it. Officially!
- Those shady producers love to switch things up. In All Stars 2, there was a bottom 3, then a bottom 2, then a bottom 3. So many bottoms. It got confusing. And sexy! When a twist shakes things up and confuses the points, just stick to scoring the girls by being in either the top or the bottom
- "Rag To Swag" is totally subjective. In early seasons, RPDR had some pretty ridiculous prizes. Now they're pretty normal: Marc Jacobs isn't absurd, even if that queen wants to be. (We say that with love, Marc.) The key here: if a queen gets a prize from somewhere with a silly, shady name, go ahead and reward them
- If teams are chosen for a team challenge by random draw (say, out of the inside of a Wigs By Vanity wig), do not take points away for "Picked Last In Gym Class"
- "The Shangela Laquifa Wadley" is subjective. Occasionally, queens re-appear after getting kicked off, but are not re-entered into the competition. We came up with the Shangie to reward queens who got to rejoin and compete, but you can award points to any queen who returns in some capacity, should you choose do so
- "The Heather" and "The Booger" can be tricky. Was Rolaskatox a clique? Obvi. They were worthy of being called Heathers. But what about the Bitter Old Lady Brigade? Were they Boogers? And what about the New York girls in season 8? Listen: call em' as you see em'
- "Her Lips Are Sealed" is mega subjective, too. What constitutes a segment? What's a little secret and what's a big secret? Here's a handy yardstick: if the queen's secret wins her more than a minute of screen time, toss her the points
- In case you're confused by "The Willam," here's a handy example: Adore left All Stars Season 2 in episode 2, so her score would be -2
- If 2 racers are neck in neck in the final lap, you're going to want a tie breaker. Here's a fun suggestion: come up with 5 RPDR trivia questions (ex. Who was runner up in season 2? Who won season 5 Snatch Game? Who was the first queen to lose her wig on the runway?) and play a game of sudden death trivia with your top 2 racers to see who takes the crown.



FEEL Y



READING IS WHAT?



FUNDAMENTAL

THE HERSTERY OF RUPAUL

BY JAMIE WOO

An introduction to the Queen of Queens

Icons understand the power of telling their story. They craft their legend through reciting the details of their journey. They give shape to their lives through recounting hardships and triumphs. And few icons have harnessed the power of myth-making quite like RuPaul Andre Charles.

“Supermodel (You Better Work”), the hit song that introduced the world to RuPaul, tells the fable of a “little black girl from the Brewster projects,” who is discovered at 15 by a modelling scout and then leads a glamorous life of fashion shoots, replete with big hair, sophisticated outfits, and over-the-top costume jewellery.

While the Brewster-Douglass housing projects are real – the largest in Detroit before they were demolished in 2014 – RuPaul did not grow up there. (It was, however, the home of Motown legends Diana Ross, Mary Wilson, and Florence Ballard.) Instead, RuPaul grew up in San Diego before moving to Atlanta with a story every bit as fascinating as the one in “Supermodel.”

If there’s an anecdote that serves as RuPaul’s origin story, it’d be set in Atlanta in the mid ‘80as. It’s there where future business partners (and *Drag Race* co-creators) Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato recall spotting a sky-high drag queen dressed in “shoulder pads, a jock strap, and a frightwig,” as they told

1960	1984	1987	1989	1993
RuPaul Andre Charles is born November 17, 1960	Moves to NYC for the first time	Appears in <i>RuPaul is: Starbooty!</i>	Lipsyncs at Wigstock	<i>Supermodel of the World</i> is released

Out, wheatpasting flyers to telephone poles announcing “RUPAUL IS EVERYTHING.” The story contains two not-altogether-separate concepts that went on to resonate through RuPaul’s career: self-promotion and self-love.

Even in his early days, RuPaul understood no one will work as hard for your success as you. (You better work!) His will to hustle took drag from the deep underground into the mainstream, hitting unexpected levels of success as the world’s best-known and most successful drag performer. *Drag Race* mirrors the path RuPaul took with acting, singing, and performing challenges. At the same time, there’s a proclamation of self-love, which beats at the heart of every episode and is best summed up in his perennial closing line: “If you can’t love yourself, how in the hell you gonna love somebody else?”

What makes RuPaul’s career remarkable is how inevitable it now seems, as the world’s best-known drag queen opened doors for the casts of *Drag Race* to reach beyond grabbing bills in clubs or performing in bit parts whenever mainstream Hollywood decided to venture into gayness.

Like so many of his era, RuPaul came out of the nightclub scene, first in Atlanta (RUPAUL IS EVERYTHING) and then New York City. In 1984, RuPaul moved to New York, before the city “spit him out” and he returned to Atlanta. Determined, RuPaul gave another go at New York and it stuck. He spent part of his time in the Big Apple bouncing between people’s couches, leaving his costumes at the Pyramid, an East Village

1996

1996

1999

2009

Becomes
spokesperson for
MAC cosmetics

The RuPaul Show
airs on VH1 with
Michelle Visage

Awarded the Vito
Russo Award at
the GLAAD Media
Awards

*RuPaul's Drag
Race* Airs on Logo

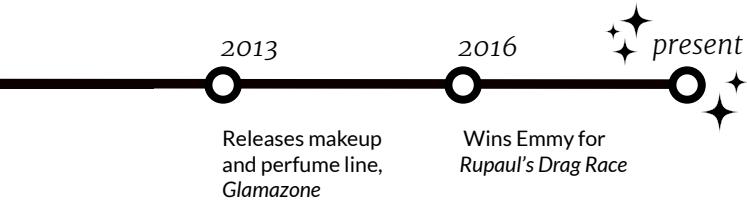
club he and fellow drag icon and frequent collaborator Lady Bunny performed at.

RuPaul was also part of Wigstock, co-created by Lady Bunny. In 1989, performing at the festival, he became an “overnight downtown star,” as he describes it, lip-syncing to “Don’t You Want My Love” off the *Ruthless People* soundtrack and Whitney Houston’s “So Emotional.” Shortly after, in 1993, the inescapable “Supermodel (You Better Work),” hit #2 on the Billboard U.S. Dance Songs chart.

Next, RuPaul landed his own talk show on VH1 in 1996, co-starring future *Drag Race* judge Michelle Visage, and thus found a new way into the homes of Americans. The show, which ran for 100 episodes, also marked a new professional level: in just over a decade, RuPaul went from being spit out by the Big Apple to having his idol Diana Ross as the first guest on his own TV show.

RuPaul continues to tell his story, whether it be through song, podcast, or extravaganza. The power of myth-building is the lesson he shares with his reemergence into pop culture, our *raison d’être*, *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. With 10 seasons and countless catchphrases, *Drag Race* is truly RuPaul’s masterpiece. And it’s not just a testament to him, but also the vehicle he uses to prepare queens to follow in his footsteps.

The world has taken notice. From celebrity fans to glowing profiles, *Drag Race* has burst out face beat and nails on, ready



to snatch the mainstream's wig. Even the Emmys noticed when, in 2016, RuPaul won for Outstanding Host for *RuPaul's Drag Race*, beating previous winners in the category Heidi Klum and Tim Gunn, Jane Lynch, and Tom Bergeron—and continuing the streak of someone from the LGBTQQ community winning since 2012.

For longtime fans of the show, the victory felt overdue: *Drag Race* has been on the air for eight years and, while the show itself wasn't nominated for Outstanding Reality-Competition Program, at last the Academy acknowledged its keystone figure.

But Ru took it in stride. "For me personally, I've lived my life and career outside, off the grid, so to get the acknowledgement from the establishment, it feels kind of weird," he told *Billboard*. "It's not like all of a sudden I have to really care and focus on what they think of me, because I've created my career without them – the establishment – giving me validation."

In many ways, the mainstream has now begun to tell the story RuPaul first wrote in Atlanta so many years ago. Such is the power of myth-building. Ru said it until we all believed it. Those posters wheat-pasted three decades ago were no lie. RuPaul is indeed EVERYTHING.

IT'S NOT A RACE TO THE TOP; IT'S A RACE TO THE BOTTOM

BY MELISSA BERNAIS

If your league is anything like mine, one or two of you will be really good at drafting Queens. Like, fantastically good. I'm talking National Football League, abstaining from sex until post-season good.

This is not me. I stand before you, tiara in hand (snatched from our league champion's head), unafraid to say that I am a fantasy league loser. An honest to goodness, horrendously bad queen picker.

Every season, I go with my gut and every season, my gut does me wrong. I'm always convinced I'll run away with the crown and every year I bottom out.

I will never learn.

Really, though, half the fun of watching your queen lip sync for her life is throwing your hands in the air while you fall off the edge of your seat, screaming silently: "*The league commission-her is gonna take away SO! MANY! POINTS!!*"

We all have our parts to play in the drama that unfolds outside the show. For instance, Stephanie and Amanda are our Crowned Queens. I'm one of the perennial losers. It's a good system.

If you find yourself on the other side of the finish line when the finale arrives, I have only one piece of advice: revel in your poor judgement and enjoy the ride. And, maybe, wear shoes you can jet out the door with when YOU steal the crown off the head of your League's Queen of the Queens. (Just make sure you can run – and fast.)



RECIPE: THE LIBRARY IS OPEN

BY MELISSA BERNAIS



A tart and sweet cock-tail, built on a little
bitter heat. Like being read by your
best frenemy

★ INGREDIENTS: COCK-TAIL

- . 45 ml Mango-Infused Blended Scotch
- . 15 ml Luxardo Maraschino
- . 5 ml Cynar
- . 25 ml freshly squeezed lime juice
- . 10 drops Cherry Bitters, like Wesley's

★ INGREDIENTS: MANGO-INFUSED SCOTCH

- . Blended Scotch (like Famous Grouse, or Black Bottle)
- . 1 Mango

★ METHOD: COCK-TAIL

Add ingredients into a shaker with ice. Shake until your shaker feels icy cold to the touch. Double strain through a Hawthorne strainer and a juice / tea strainer into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a thin slice of lime and a boozy cherry (La Parisienne Kirsch Soaked Cherries will change your cocktail life, FYI).

METHOD: MANGO-INFUSED SCOTCH ★

1. Get your beautiful face a good-ish bottle of blended scotch. Find a not-quite-ripe mango and give it a loving squeeze: if it yields to pressure, throw it back. Peel, stone and roughly chop the mango.
2. Place the mango and scotch into a jar large enough to hold everything with room for shaking. Seal tightly. You don't need to use the whole bottle, but honestly, it's lovely and you'll probably try to kick your own ass for not making more when it's gone.
3. Give it a couple of shakes and store in a cool, dark cupboard. Shake it and taste it every 24 hours or so, until the scotch takes on a satisfactory mango flavour. When you're satisfied with how things are tasting, strain the scotch into a bottle for keepin', ensuring that all of the mango bits are removed.

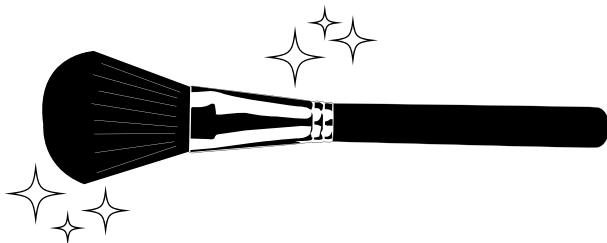
You'll need 2 or 3 days to get it to a mango-y place, so plan ahead. But really, make this way before you think you'll need it so you'll have it on-hand for emergencies, because the library is ALWAYS open.

★ ★ MY (*STRAIGHT*) ★ ★ ***BOYFRIEND'S PICKS***

BY STEPH LABA & TYSON WARD

The Luck of an Assisted Roster

Since we started the league, my boyfriend Tyson has played from the sidelines. He's my bench support and occasional secret weapon. We love watching RPDR together and his take on the queens is insightful and poignant. So each season, I offer him one pick from my roster of six queens. Here's how his picks so far have fared...



★ SEASON 6: ***LAGANJA ESTRANJA***

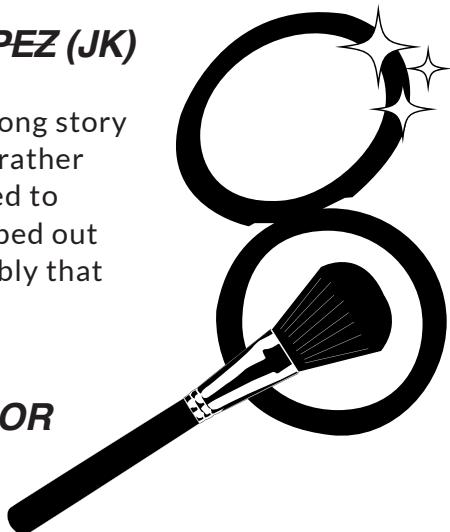
Tyson didn't have much context to go off for this round. I basically showed him the cast picture and he immediately pointed at Laganja and said, "She's going to be crazy. I don't know if it's going to be good or bad. But she's the wild card for sure". To this day we still re-watch that comedy queens *Untucked* scene. (You know which one I'm talking about.)

✨ SEASON 7: **NAYSHA LOPEZ (JK)**

Season seven was a bad year. Long story short, I wanted to be strategic rather than going with my gut and tried to diversify my roster. Tyson skipped out making his pick and I lost horribly that year.

✨ SEASON 8: **THORGY THOR**

He wanted Bob. I wanted Bob. We all wanted Bob! I made him “choose” Thorgy.



✨ ASS2: **KATYA ZAMOLODCHIKOVA**

Katya, is one of Tyson's favourite queens. He thinks the Russian schtick is genius. He admitted he didn't think she would take the crown (because Alaska) but he's hoping Trish will be on All Stars Season 3.

✨ SEASON 9: **SASHA VELOUR**

Like all thirsty bitches, we geared up for season 9 by watching the new queens' live performances online. About a minute into watching our first Sasha video, Tyson said “She's going to be awesome. I don't know if she'll be able to conform her style to the show, but she's an artist with tons of ideas.” I have to agree. We're both Team Sasha all the way.



★ ★ ★

GUIDE TO TORONTO

VIEWING PARTIES

BY RUSS MARTIN

Where to watch RPDR with your squirrel friends

RPDR may not be *RuPaul's Best Friend Race*, but the experience of watching it certainly is. *Drag Race* is best viewed with your good Judies who will shout at the teevee along with you, and recite all of Ru's catchphrases in unison.

If your city has a gaybourhood, it has RPDR viewing parties. Members of our league have watched the show everywhere from L.A. (Raven and Morgan hosting at Micky's = everything) to San Francisco (Honey Mahogany spilling the tea at a full-on video bar!), but our home base in Toronto, where there are plentiful options for watching who sashays away alongside fellow superfans.

Here are our favourite places to watch:

THE GLADSTONE ★

Hosted by the outrageous House of Filth, The Gladstone's viewing parties are served up with a side of stellar live performances. Stuffed with cute west end boys who all look frighteningly similar to each other, these always-packed *Drag Race* nights are the perfect place to catch the best – and

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Gladstone Ave.



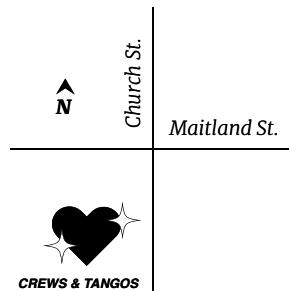
THE GLADSTONE

Queen St.

most off-beat – local girls before and after the show. Where else can you see a queen lip syncing to “99 Red Balloons” while popping balloons in your face?

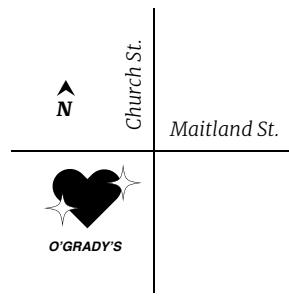
••• CREWS & TANGOS

Crews is the classic when it comes to Toronto drag. There's a full stage and a giant projector, making it the best option for premieres and finales. In fact, it was the site of our league's very first finale party! Plus, the bar opens just before the show starts, so you don't have to show up early to stake out a seat.



O'GRADY'S •••

Maybe we shouldn't be letting the secret out, but...O'Grady's takes reservations! Getting a good seat at a viewing party is a bit of a blood sport, but at O'Grady's, it's as simple as a phone call. It's lower key watching than The Gladstone or Crews, but everyone still screams at every Ru-veal.



NOTE: THE ONLY REAL RULE FOR VIEWING PARTIES IS TO SHARE YOUR TABLE. THIS IS RUPAUL'S BEST FRIEND RACE AND EVERY CHAIR SHOULD BE FILLED WITH A BOTTOM'S BOTTOM, K?

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THE CHURCH OF RUPAUL

BY JAMIE WOO

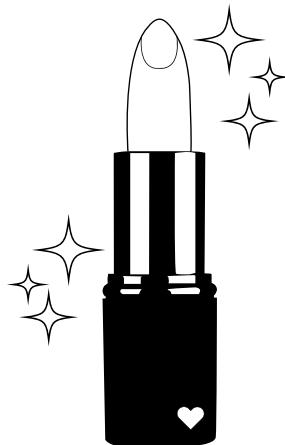
Season nine of RuPaul's Drag Race is the first under a Republican presidency. Where the start of the Obama presidency signalled hope, there is much uncertainty and worry about what the world will look like with Donald Trump in power. The violent rhetoric Trump used during his campaign has already led to an increase in hate crimes. What will four years of his presidency bring?

Given the unknown ahead, it's important that RuPaul and *Drag Race* continue on. Television hosts have often played a critical function in public life during uncertain times, acting as calming figures. Fronting the Emmys after 9/11, Ellen DeGeneres told jokes both silly and pointed, which not only foreshadowed her hosting chops, but also helped people escape the realities of their lives, even if just for a few hours.

RuPaul has played a similar role, since *Drag Race* began in February 2009, less than a year after the crushing loss over Prop 8. The mood was a mixture of solemnity, frustration, and anger, and *Drag Race* was a salve. That's because it's a show wherein, yes, men in wigs compete for a crown, but what's also on display is very human stories that show, as RuPaul often describes it, "the tenacity of the human spirit."

RuPaul projects comfort, warmth, and wisdom, in the the

self-motivating tagline “If you can’t love yourself, how in the hell you gonna love somebody else?” and the discussions of “journeys” and “growth” in chats over Tic Tac mints. It’s a page right out of the Oprah playbook, and RuPaul’s years of hosting experience – including two seasons anchoring *The RuPaul Show* on VH1 and his current podcast *What’s the Tee* – prove he’s got what it takes to be a mainstay.



RuPaul has created a world for the audience to escape into, to feel welcomed, and entertained – one episode at a time. And we will turn to RuPaul and *Drag Race* even more in the political climate to come. A lot has changed since *Drag Race* began its run. In eight years, same-sex marriage went from Prop 8 to a SCOTUS decision to back to being on the chopping block. RuPaul and *Drag Race* have acted as a continuum that affirmed gay culture through a bleak loss and a triumphant victory.

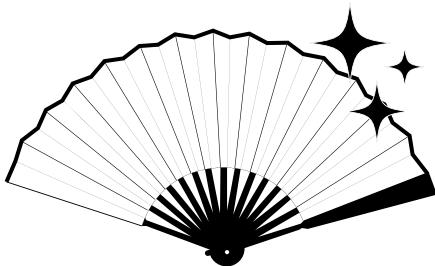
A new generation has found its voice through the show as it resurfaces bits of gay culture for the social media age. The show created a revival for drag and has introduced historical gay references to a new generation through vignettes like *Snatch Game*. (See: Jinkx Monsoon’s Little Edie, and more recently Alyssa Edwards’s Joan Crawford and Alaska’s Mae West.) Viewing parties bring together gays at a time when Grindr has supposedly torn bar culture apart.

The show has been a constant in a gay culture that has swiftly changed. I remember as a teenager learning the old code: references to Dorothy and *All About Eve* that granted access to the club. You’re born with same-sex desires, but it’s knowing all the words to “MacArthur Park” that makes you gay. That code both bonded together those who knew it and signaled the outsiders who didn’t.

No one wants to return to a time that necessitated a secret language, but as those references were thrown out or not passed down, very little has replaced them. Greater acceptance prompted the diffusion of gay men away from gayborhoods. Being out in more places and in more ways meant gay men could integrate their other identities, but with such freedom came ambiguity: what does it mean to be gay now?

Drag Race provides one vision, perhaps far more idealistic than the one we live in. On the show, there are a majority of contestants of colour, giving Latinx, black, and Asian queens the opportunity to show off their talents. The show continues to poke fun of and deconstruct gender in a culture that has doubled-down on being

“masc4masc.” And *Drag Race* features contestants of different ages and varying body types. In short, it’s a rare showcase for the inclusion so many of us thought we’d find when we came out.



In some ways, I think of *Drag Race* as a kind of church service and we the faithful congregation show up to feel safe and be around others. In Toronto, you can find as many as five happening in bars across the city. Every week, friends and I attend *Drag Race* screenings out at bars, because there is ritual around it. We call back to the screen sayings we know by heart and drink too many communion beverages. We love to be in RuPaul’s world, where individuality is valued, wit matters over looks, and a can-do spirit can win it all. We know the stories aren’t always truth, but they’re still gospel.

RuPaul understands the power of bringing a splintered community together: “I love the fact that our show is watched by



groups of people—it's event viewing,” Ru said in his post-Emmy win interview. “In an era where the nightclub business, especially the gay nightclub, has suffered, because of apps and people don’t have to go to a bar to meet someone, our show has been used as a tool to unite people and get them to watch together. That’s really what this show is about.”

Even those who don’t go out to watch know they’re part of something. Rituals and customs are necessary for any culture to survive. With *Drag Race* on the air, people can talk to friends, arguing over if a win was deserved or not. They can attend live shows, like *Battle of the Seasons*. They can take a break from their worries, knowing that RuPaul will be there for us.

Can I get an Amen?





AS GAY PEOPLE

WE

GET

TO

CHOOSE

OUR

FAMILIES.



That's all femmes!



FANTASY LEAGUE



HAUS OF MA

••• **REIGNING QUEEN** •••
STEPHANIE SERNOSKIE

RUSS MARTIN

AMANDA HARVEY

ANDREW GRAY

STEPH LABA

JAMIE WOO

KEVIN NAULLS

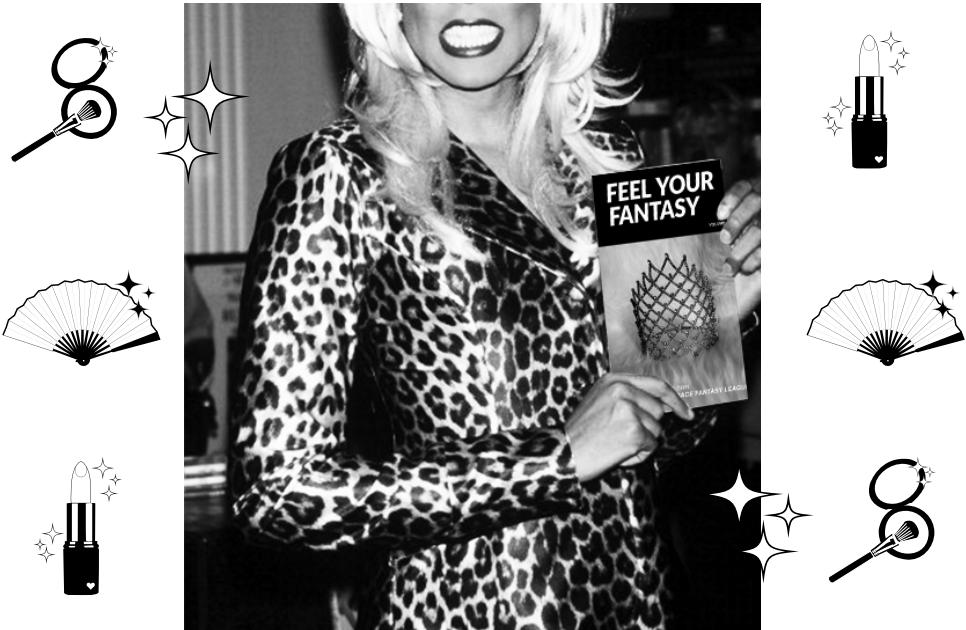
KRISTIN NICHOLSON

MELISSA BERNAIS

ELLIE ANGLIN

KATE KILLET

CALLING ALL FANTASY QUEENS!



WE WANT YOU TO START YOUR OWN FANTASY LEAGUE!

Our little league is outgrowing itself and we now want to spread our sparkle. We're looking to build a loose knit network of equally fab leagues. A league of extraordinary, non-binary lovers of RPDR!

We're on the hunt for new bossy bottom HBICs to run their own leagues. If that's **YOU**, we'll help you get started and even connect you to fellow Drag Race superfans to join your ranks.

If you want to join us, start your own league, or even just talk drag, send your questions, suggestions and inappropriate love letters to:

FeelYourFantasyPresents@gmail.com

🏁 **HAPPY RACING!** 🏁

xoxoxoxokittens,
Feel Your Fantasy

RUPAUL VICTORIA PORKCHOP PARKER
SHANGELA RAVEN RAJA GEMINI SHARON
NEEDLES ALASKA THUNDERFUCK 5000 KATY
ZAMOLODCHIKOVA MILK JINKX MONSOON
HENNY MYSTIQUE SUMMERS MADISON
ONGINA NINA FLOWERS KIM CHI REBECCA
GLASSCOCK MIMI IMFURST TAMMIE BROWN
LATRICE ROYALE MANILA LUZON PHI PHI
O'HARA SASHA VELOUR AJA TRIXIE MATTEL
WILLAM COURTNEY ACT ADORE DELANO
BIANCA DEL RIO NINA BO'NINA BROWN
JIGGLY CALIENTE VIOLET CHACHKI TYRA
SANCHEZ PANDORA ROXXY VIVACIOUS BOB

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