

Drag Queen Terminology

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"Drag queen" used to be a slang term for a cross-dresser or transgendered person. However, this usage is both dated and widely considered inappropriate (Canadian transgender activist Star Maris wrote a song entitled I'm Not A Fucking Drag Queen to express the difference.) By courtesy, most drag queens are usually referred to as "she" while in drag. Many performers protect their character quite angrily and will be offended if they are referred to as "he", by their legal name, or Drag Queen while they are in drag.

Drag queens were formerly called transvestites. However, that term is now used for someone with transvestic fetishism: a fetish for the clothing of the opposite gender role. Contrariwise, drag queens in general do not do drag for reasons of sexual pleasure. Most who perform, do it as a way to be in the spotlight, and as a road to fame; although that fame can be very localized. Furthermore, most transvestic fetishists are heterosexual men, whereas most drag queens are gay or transgendered. (Indeed, there is a (small) community of straight women drag queens.)

In some areas, drag queens are referred to as female impersonators; in other areas this term is quite dated. "Female impersonation," under that name, used to be illegal in many places, which inspired the famous drag queen Silvia Rivera to suggest to her friends that they should wear buttons saying "I am a boy" so they couldn't be accused of female impersonation.