

Drag  
From  
A-Z

BY BRANDI AMARA SKYY

*Brandi*★  
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# Intro

I have been doing drag for a little over eight years now, but I've been a performer since I came out of the womb (okay *really* it started in second grade, but my friends always joke that I came out of the womb turning!) In my eight years of drag and my long career as a performer, I've fallen, I've gotten up, I've painted too hard, I've won, I've lost, I've been flawless, and sometimes I've just flat out SUH UCK ED!!!

But, I keep dragging on because I LOVE everything about this art form: the costumes, the creative freedom, the family, the history, the glitz + glam EVERYTHING!!!

One of the beauties of drag is that each queen forges her own way through Dragland and no two drag roads are ever *exactly* the same. But there are some similarities: we ALL start somewhere and we ALL grow into our dragdom.

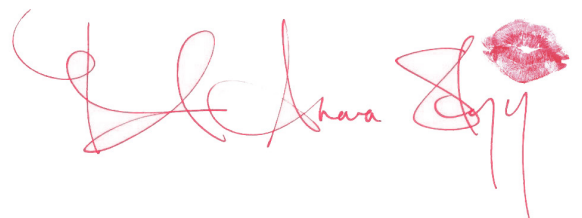
I mean, I haven't ALWAYS been as flawless as I am today (I know—totally a tough one to swallow). I became flawless because I let myself learn from my mistakes—and TRUST, I've made P L E N T Y of them.

So I wrote this e-book knowing that throughout my drag + performance career I have been guilty of NOT doing over half of these. I share them with you because I love nothing more than seeing drag queens, faux queens, drag kings, and really ANY kind of performers GROW into their full creative + performance potential.

While this is a post for drag performers (and more specifically drag queens), it is just as relevant to burlesque performers, dancers, and just about anyone who steps foot onto a stage to entertain.

*Drag from A to Z* is a *tool* not a bible. Pick your favs and discard the rest. You'll find your own way, but my hope is that these little nuggets of drag wisdom make it just a little bit easier.

Yours in all things drag,

 Shana Lynn

**DRAG FROM A - Z**

## AUDIENCE

Yep, we're starting off with a BANG! The **audience** is one (if not THE) MOST important aspect of drag. Without the **audience** there *is* no performance; it's just you on stage being fabulous to...well, you. An **audience** can make or break you. They can help you go viral, they can post to social media how flawless or gutted you are or they can walk out mid performance for a cigarette break and never look back. In this case, size does NOT matter—if there's three or 3,000 in your **audience**, your first obligation as the ruling monarch of your **queendom** is to put on a show for *them*. **Perform** to *them*. Flirt with *them*. Make eye contact and force them to acknowledge your fabulousity!

## BLING!

Okay. Okay. OKAY!!! Fine. I'll admit it. **Bling** is not necessarily necessary for drag. HOWEVER, **bling** *does* add a little extra sparkly something to your drag ensemble. Think of **bling** as the ALL occasion piece; it's that piece in your drag closet that can immediately dress up ANY outfit. Yes, diamonds ARE a girl's best friend, but so are diamond's sister's, Swarovski crystals and their cousin, rhinestones!!! Don't have \$100+ for some DragonLady **bling**?!? **Bling** comes with a variety of price tags. There's a world of cheap but fabulous **bling** just waiting to be explored! Flea markets, resale shops, and even vintage shops can be low price sources. Get your **bling** on and don't be afraid to GET CREATIVE!!!! *It is drag* after all! So **bling** outside the box = don't limit your **bling** to just your jewelry—**bling** out your eyes, you shoes, even your nails!

## COMMUNITY

A drag **community** (aka family) can be the best boost for a baby queen and an amazing reminder to the professional queen of one's drag roots. Make it a point to seek out your local drag **community**. But remember that just because *you* found *them* doesn't guarantee you a golden ticket into the sisterhood of the traveling drag queens. **YOU** have to put in the effort to be a part of it. Get involved, attend shows, and for the love god TIP!!!!

## DRAMA

Here in dragland, **drama** takes two forms. Form one: “GURL!!!! You are giving me **DRA MA**, house DOWN!” Form two: “Gurl, she is *d r a m a a a*.” Be only the former. Serve, don’t BE, **drama**. ‘Nough said.

## EYELASHES

NEVER underestimate the power of good **lashes**!! This bears repeating: NEVER underestimate the power of good **lashes**!! And don’t believe when a queen—who shall remain nameless (asia o’hara )—tells you your lashes are too big for your face—they are not. LASHES CAN NEVER BE TOO BIG FOR YOUR FACE!!!!!!! A #199 and #301 combo?!?! Yes, please!!

## FUN

This one should go without saying, but you wouldn’t know it by the way some queens bitch and moan about their craft and how much time, money, energy, \*insert your own complaint here\* it requires. Don’t take yourself or your drag too seriously—it’s the quickest way to burn out. Laugh. Poke **fun** at yourself, have one go-to **f-u-n** number that you pull out of your bag of drag tricks when you’re just not feeling it. The more **fun** YOU have the more **fun** the audience will. AND . . . the more likely they will be to tip you a GAZILLION dollars (or at least buy you a drink!).

## GLAMOUR

I L I V E for glam drag. Glam drag is my element, my niche. But the beauty about **glamour** is that it’s not one dimensional or universal for all. MY drag glam could be completely opposite of yours, yet we can still both be serving up some serious glam fish. That’s because **glamour** is one of those rare things that you can find any/everywhere: celebrities, architecture, food, just to name a few. And **glamour** can be found in all forms of drag: gender fuck, subversive, political, camp drag. You name it; it’s there. The best thing about **glamour** is that *you* define it because **glamour** isn’t just a look, but it’s also an *attitude*. It’s putting 100% into your art. It’s knowing and being the best goddamn drag queen you can be. Now THAT’S fucking **glam OUBROUS!!!**

## HISTORY

Drag has a very rich and complex **history** so take the time to learn about it. **Research** the queens, locally and globally, that have made a difference in the art form. Put yourself in another queen's shoes. Try to imagine what it was like to be a queen before Stonewall vs. what it's like today. Many queens before us have battled persecution, harassment, and sometimes even death for us queens to be where we are today. And even our drag generation isn't guaranteed freedom from these things (see Drag Queens on the Capitol for an example of how far we have NOT come). Know your roots. Know where you came from. Know the past so you can impact the present and transform the future.

## ILLUSION

This is another one of those terms that can have multiple meanings. Some queens prefer to be called **illusionists**; while some use the term **illusion** to describe the dragging of celebrities or other recognizable figures. There is no right or wrong answer. Drag *is* the art of **illusion**, but it also can be the art of revealing (a queen pulls out her breast padding or talks in her "boy" voice on stage, etc.). Don't get lost in the semantics of drag; get lost *in your drag* instead.

## JUDGES/ING AKA READING

(*THE NOT FUN KIND*)

There will always be individuals who feel like they have the right to read your drag. There will always be *that person* who will tell you that you shouldn't have done the Grace Jones talent again, that it's tired, and they are ready for something new. Take your everydragday **judges** like a grain of salt: sometimes you need a little to heighten the flavor, but too much just makes the food inedible. Know how to sift through your critiques. **Use** what makes sense to you and then **tuck** the rest away in the corner of your drag closet. Latrice Royale said it best, "Get up, look sickening, and make them eat it!"

## KING

I know this next sentence might be a little hard to digest for us divas, but we, drag queens, are not the only kind of drag performers that

exist. Shocking and hard to swallow, I know.

**Kings** have been in the drag world as long as queens have and are doing some really amazing things. **Kings** have their own successful drag conference known as IDKE, International Drag King Community Extravaganza now, I believe, in its 15th year, they have their own pageantry division in the USofA system, and they put together shows, like many queens, that benefit our **community** as a whole—**Kings for Cause** immediately comes to mind. The point is that we gender performers really *are* in this together. *WE* are a collective family (see **community**). Yes, we fight. Yes, we sometimes hate each other. Yes, we bitch and moan when the other gets more stage time, but we are still dragifying the world, *together*, one rhinestone at a time.

## LIP SYNC

*Gurl*. This one is right up there with **audience**. There is no drag without **lip sync**. Even if you are singing live, perhaps even more so, you have to be ON YOUR WORDS!! There is no drag without **lip sync**. There is no drag without **lip sync**. LEARN YOUR WORDS. There is no drag without **lip sync**. Seriously.

## MUG

You can tell a whole lot about a queen from her mug. Which *means* take the time to make sure that your **mug** is saying what you want it to say. When you're first starting out, your **mug** can take anywhere from an hour to all day—and there is nothing wrong with that. After all these years, I still take the time to let my **mug** evolve as I paint it because I want to be as flawless as I can be. Some pros can whip out a drag **mug** in 30 minutes and I envy them because that's just not my gift. There is no right way to paint a drag **mug**—find your own **mug** flow. And if you need a little help or don't know where to start, I gottcha covered.

## NERVES

Everyone gets nervous. Even the most seasoned performer has moments where their **nerves** kick-in. My best advice and what I tell myself the nanosecond before I go onstage is: *savor the moment—this very moment, nerves and all, that you're in. Eat it all up and then SERVE it to your audience. You at least have the balls to get up*



on that stage. Where dem haters at? Sitting in the audience getting ready to watch me bring the MOTHER FUCKEN' HOUSE DOWN!! (Hey, it works for me! Don't **judge**.) The key to my little internal monologue is: if YOU believe it your audience + everyone else will too.

## OBSERVE

EVERYTHING! Look EVERYWHERE. At other drag queens, artists, models, magazines, dance concerts, pageants, TV shows, picture books, animals, food, EVERYTHING!! Know that inspiration comes from those places that we least expect to find it and search those places out! Never stop learning, growing, and most importantly transforming into the best damn drag queen you can be. Find your future in the **observatory** of endless dragspirations.

## PERFORM

Standing on stage just mouthing your words does NOT a **performance** make. There needs to be *something behind the lip sync*. Something that makes me stop dead in my beeline to the bar to get another Don Julio and pineapple. Your **performance** needs to be THE most important thing in that bar. Not alcohol, not the special guest performer, YOU. If I'm going to give my hard earned money away then you need to give me something in return—a show. That doesn't mean that you need to dance nonstop or do 11 death drops in a row (although that would, in my humble opinion, warrant a \$20)—**performing** is all about connecting *your* drag dots: your costume \* to the song \* to your hair \* to your **lip sync** \* to the **audience**.

## QUEENDOM

The land that you perform in is your **queendom** so treat it with respect. You created this **queendom** through your hard work, dedication and love of the art form. Enjoy it, but remember the **queendom** giveth but the **queendom** can also taketh away. Sooooo . . . always put your BEST (high-heeled) foot forward.

## RESEARCH

This one goes mano-Y-mano with **observe**. **Research** just as much as you **observe**. Think you're the first person to pull out a SICKONEEN drop-in-from-the-ceiling-falling-into-a-split talent entrance? NOPE.

**Research.** If you think it hasn't been done before it probably has . . . or at least something like it. BUT that doesn't mean that you *can't* do it. It just means that you need to know that it's been done (that way there are no surprises) and figure out (**research**) how you can make yours different and/or better. (This is not to say that ALL new ideas have been taken—just the good ones!)

(Oh, and yes. The sickOneen drop-in-from-the-ceiling-falling-into-a-split talent entrance *has* been done FLAWLESSLY. Watch it here. Yea, told you it's amazing!)

## STAR

Drag can make you **star** no more than a sex tape can. Wait . . . um, yea, never mind. Let's try this: drag can make you a **star** no more than being a comedian, painter, writer, \*insert any other art form other than sex tape maker\*. Unless you are one of the chosen few who get selected as one of RU's girls (or your last name starts with Kar . . .) then you're going to have to enter **stardom** the old fashion way: **work**. That doesn't mean that drag can't be a catalyst to your **stardom**, but YOU are going to have to put in the hours and effort to make a name for yourself and then get that name out there.

## TUCK

Or **tucking**. Whatever you want to call it . . . **TUCK!** *Especially* in booty shorts. True story: I was glazed over watching an amateur talent night queen when I heard the blonde girl sitting next me snickering. I snapped out of my glaze just in time to see that almost everyone in the **audience** was wearing the same smirk she was. I obviously didn't get the memo and was about to give up and get a drink when out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of something on the performing queen that should NOT have been visible—a Freudian slip of the **tuck** tape or just no **tuck** tape at all?!?!?! Two things immediately popped into my head:

- 1) Why are you NOT wearing tights or underwear or a thong and
- 2) Why aren't you **TUCKING!**?!?!?

Or

don't **tuck**. If that's your drag, then you do your thang, honey. I ain't

gonna **judge** you. If you are a gender fuck dragster that refuses to **tuck** because you want to revolutionize drag, then by all means don't let me (or **tucking**) stand in your way. I don't care. What I *do care* about is that it doesn't look like an accident—so tuck or untuck *intentionally*.

## USE

your drag to explore places, things, personas, fabrics, techniques that help you step outside your (in and out of drag) comfort **zone**. Drag is the ultimate place to experiment with things that make you uncomfortable in your everyday world. Don't like color? Then make it a goal to buy the most fabulous neon frock for a night of tipping around town. Then take what you've discovered from your drag experience about color and find ways to incorporate what you've learned into your daily life. Make your drag the vehicle to all things *you*.

## VA JAY JAY

(OR LACK THEREOF)

Here's **va jay jay** in nutshell (yes, pun intended): some queens have them, some queens don't. Some queens love them, some queens don't. Some queens were born this way; others were born this way but just had to get the memo to their bodies. Whatever sides of the **va jay jay** you fall on, it's imperative to know that having or not having a **va jay jay** does not make or break a queen. It doesn't matter what's between your legs; what matters is what's in your little drag heart . . . awwww.

## WORK

Yes, **work**. Yes, drag is **WORK** (see **Star**). Yes, that means that your drag, your costumes, your talent, your mixes, your make-up will NOT be handed to you on a silver glittered platter. Yes, that means that you will have to *make an investment* in order to see any profit (monetary or otherwise). And let's just be candid shall we? Unless you're Candis Cayne, RuPaul, or Lady Bunny, you will be investing in your drag a long time before you even begin to turn a profit. And you can bet that they all **worked** their asses OFF when they were first trying to make it. But that shouldn't stop you. At least you are doing **work** that you love instead of being stuck on an oil rig in the middle

of the ocean. That would NOT be fun, just sayen’.

## X FACTOR

Yes, there will always be a queen out there who is better than you—who can do 10 death drops in a row (no, I am NOT bitter) while balancing a lit candelabra. Find *your X factor*. Find what makes you a standout; what makes YOU a **star**. Which leads me to . . .

## . . . YOUBYOU

There is no other queen that experiences drag the way that you do and there is no other queen that can do drag like you do. Your creation of queen is unique. It’s the you *in* you that creates the **X factor**. It’s okay to find things in other queens that inspire you, but **use** them as dragspirations and tools to create *your own trademarks*. Do you *your way*—you’re the only one that can.

## THE ZONE

There comes a time in everyone’s dragdom where they feel it. Yea, you know what I’m talking about. EVERYTHING has come together: your hard **work**, your **mug**, your **lip sync**, your **illusion**, the **audience**, the universe; You walk into your gig with an extra high kick in your step, you love everything you put on, and you **perform** your little drag heart out. You are on top of Dragland, the drag world, your **queendom**. You have just reached what other athletes call “the **zone**.” For ALL of us: performers, queens, athletes, people, artists, these moments are rare. Cherish them. **Use** these moments to help fuel you through the times when your wig just won’t stay on, you hate every outfit you brought, you’re not feeling your music, and the **audience** is a dud. Keep these magical drag moments close because they are few and far between, but always well worth waiting for.



I'm a glitterbomb of glam who has made it my personal mission to bedazzle the universe. I am a drag artist (and the first EVER Miss Diva USofA), make-up artist, editor-in-chief of *GAG Magazine*, a writer, belly dancer and a lover of all things sparkly!! But deep down I'm really just a Renaissance soul who wants to make beautiful things, teach people to color outside the lines, and show the world that EVERY person has a little drag glam in them (yes, even YOU! ☺).

Ready to get started?

Head on over to my cyber home at [www.brandiamaraskyy.com](http://www.brandiamaraskyy.com) to check out all the glam related goodness I've created to get you sparkling! Or drop me a line on Twitter or a pic on Instagram @brandiamaraskyy.

Be it all. Do it all. Wear it all . . . because life's way too short to be muted!

Love, Light + Lashes,

  
Brandia Skyy

About the  
Author

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Feel free to reference, quote, or re-publish a brief section of this little glambook wherever you feel a little extra glam is needed.

Social media, your blog, book, as a performance piece, rhinestone art . . . I'm cool with it all.

I just kindly ask that you include my full name, Brandi Amara Skyy, + link back to my website: [brandiamaraskyy.com](http://brandiamaraskyy.com)

Xo.

The background is a dense field of bokeh lights in shades of gold, purple, and magenta, creating a shimmering, textured effect. The lights vary in size and focus, with some appearing sharp and others blurred.

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