

MUSIC

Andy Warhol said that everyone gets his or her 15 minutes of fame. If that's true, then drag diva RuPaul must be on his ninth life. The man who made "Supermodel" a No. 1 dance tune, counseled Jan Brady on the silver screen and made donning drag glamorous and chic, has far surpassed his 15 minutes and has earned his place in the annals of pop culture.

RuPaul—singer, performer and author—was honored March 9 with the Gay and Lesbian American Music Awards' Out Music Award, which is given to an openly gay artist who has done extraordinary work in the entertainment industry.

"It actually means more to me to get the Out Music Award than any other award, because it comes from my gay brothers and sisters," says the 36-year-old performer and MAC Cosmetics spokesperson. "In this world that is so masculine and male-based, where anything that goes against masculinity is put down, to be honored for what I've done is a real achievement, because it shows that people understand what it means to go against the grain."

RuPaul has based his career on gender bending. He is proud to be honored for breaking the stereotype and not limiting himself to society's designated role for men.

"Anyone who is pumping femininity or pre-fab femininity into society is a hero in my book," he says.

RuPaul hosts his own variety show on cable TV's VH1 and has just released *RuPaul's Go-Go Box Classics*, a dance compilation on Rhino paying homage to his days as a club dancer.

"When I moved back to Atlanta [in the early '80s], I was a go-go dancer for two and a half years. This album reflects that time in my life," he says.

He hand-picked each of the tunes on the disc.

"The CD is for people to go and be a go-go dancer at home. The songs are all tried-and-true classics, and not the same old ones you hear on every other CD either," he insists.

Born RuPaul Andre Charles in San Diego, Calif., RuPaul began performing on stage in the early 1980s. Fame found its way to the 6-foot-7-inch diva after he released the drag anthem "Supermodel" in 1993. The single topped pop and dance charts around the world and made him an international star.

"The biggest difference between Andre and RuPaul is that off stage I'm much more Scorpio-istic and intense. I tend to be somewhat heavy and introverted," he says.

"RuPaul on stage is outgoing. Outrageous. Very accessible. It's a balance for my Scorpio-ism. But RuPaul on stage is an act. Entertainment," he adds. "I'm much more subdued. I'm a man living a human life,

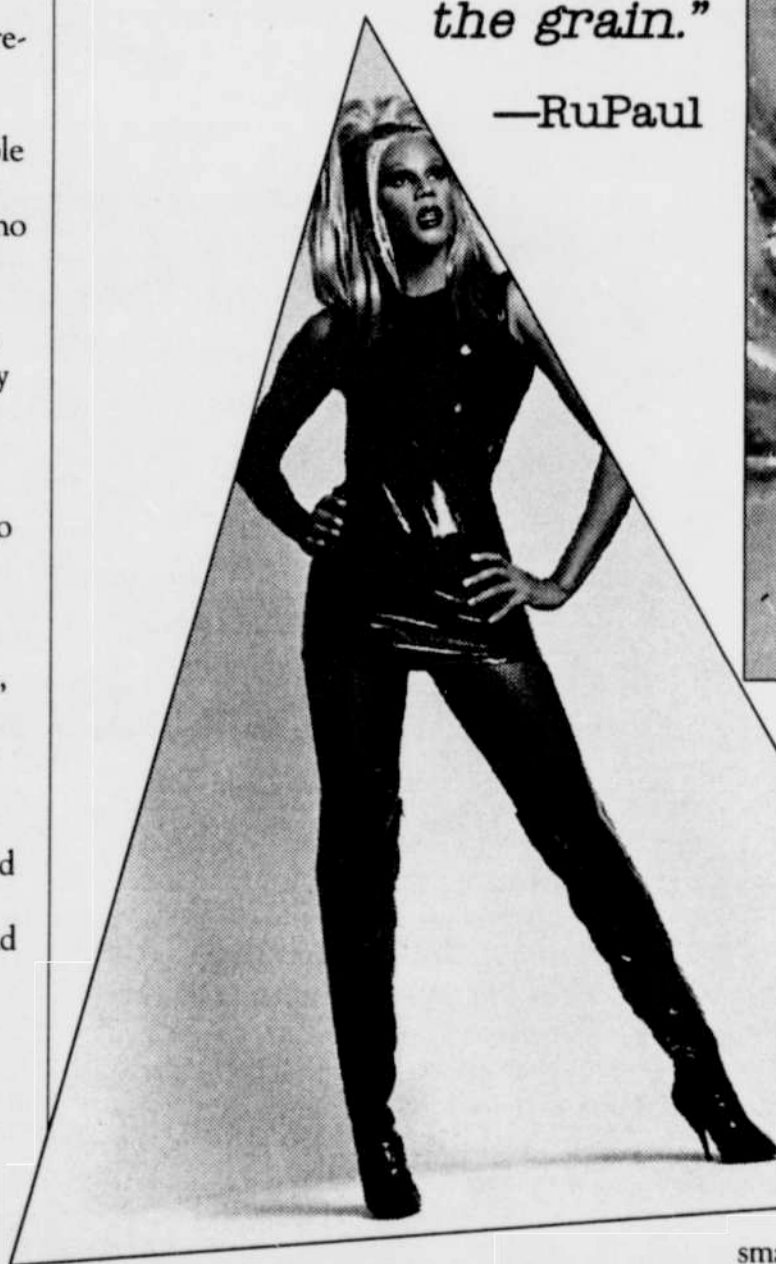
Lifestyles of the Ru and famous

Five years after "Supermodel" and still in the spotlight, RuPaul grabs a GLAMA and puts out a new disc

BY JEFFREY L. NEWMAN

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which is very different from being a super-human on stage. Even if I was on stage as Andre, out of drag, I'd still be a lot more animated. When you are on stage you pump up the volume."

Since 1993, RuPaul has recorded three full-length albums: *Supermodel of the World*, *Foxy Lady*, and last year's successful Christmas opus, *Ho, Ho, Ho*. He has scored four Top 10 dance hits, including 1997's *Billboard* No. 1 smash "It's Raining Men... The Sequel," a

remake with Martha Wash of her disco camp classic.

RuPaul hosted his own morning show on New York's WKTU-FM for two years. He recently resigned that job to begin work on a syndicated radio show, which is expected to be launched this summer by Chancellor Media, the same company that owns WKTU.

"Ten years ago I was in L.A., with holes in my shoes, wishing that one day my name would be on a billboard on Sunset Boulevard," he says. "Today my picture is up there. I feel like I have finally made it."

In his 1995 autobiography, *Letting It All Hang Out*, the Ru-meister offered an eclectic look at his accession to fame. From recounting his dysfunctional relationship with his parents, his drug use (LSD was a regular dietary supplement between ages 20 and 30), and his days as a go-go dancer, RuPaul literally let it all hang out.

The darkest time in his life came when he turned 28: "I had just moved to New York from Los Angeles and couldn't get arrested to save my life. I had no money, no real place to stay. I was still doing the drugs. My sister had kicked me out of her house. It was a pretty dark time," the singer recalls. "I thought about committing suicide. But I never came close to doing it. I knew that if I just hung tight and kept the faith I would get through it. I knew change was coming and I just had to hold on."

As for the future, RuPaul has no plans to slow down or retire the wig and pumps. For those who can't get enough, he'll be forever immortalized in wax at the soon-to-open Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum in New York City.

With nearly half a dozen films already to his credit, including Spike Lee's *Crooklyn*, *The Brady Bunch Movie* and *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*, RuPaul hopes to explore more of his thespian side. His most recent movie is *An Unexpected Life*, with Stockard Channing, airing on the USA Network.

While being a celebrity has been great, RuPaul says, he's never worried about what happens when it's over. "Even if I had been a one-hit wonder, I'd still be working, I'd still have ideas and aspirations and I'd see my inspiration come to light," he says. "Success is something that is between you and yourself. The most important thing is for you to love and adore yourself, that is true success. I've accomplished that. So, with or without the fame, I've been successful."

■ AN UNEXPECTED LIFE airs on June 24 on the USA Network.

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