

An Interview With Emmonia, Edmonton's Punk-Horror Drag Artist

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When you think of drag, you might think of gorgeous outfits, immaculate makeup, and dance numbers set to classic club beats. Maybe you've binge-watched every season of *RuPaul's Drag Race* on Netflix or eagerly anticipated the premiere of OUTtv's *Call Me Mother* to catch a glimpse of [local Edmonton Queen Felicia Bonée](#).

In Edmonton, the drag scene is as diverse as genres of music, and after over a year of pandemic performances and social stressors, the scene has shifted, but not necessarily in a bad way.

Just ask Emmonia, a punk-rock drag performer here in Edmonton. Emmonia is an entertainer and drag performer with [Party Queens](#), a drag group run by performer Gemma Nye.

Emmonia's drag journey began around the start of the pandemic. After a seemingly endless 2020 and a somehow even *longer* 2021, Emmonia is coming up on a year since their October debut in 2020. Since last year, Emmonia has become known for ghoulish looks and scene-punk performances, turning heads and finding their voice as Edmonton's favourite Party Ghoul.

Emmonia is just one of dozens of drag performers that call Edmonton home. With each performer bringing their own style of drag, the scene is diverse and unique, with performers as varied as genres of music.

"We're really all over the place in terms of what kind of drag you can get, which is really nice," Emmonia says. "If you come here, you're going to get a little bit of everything in a show."

Over the course of a year of drag, Emmonia's style and focus shifted from Pop-Punk, Scene, and Metal-inspired performances to focus on a mix of horror and laughable performances.

"Over the course of time, I realized my love for horror really transcribed into drag," Emmonia says. "Now, it's about 50 per cent horror in the sense of trying to be scary, like trying to actually shock people on stage, and the other 50 per cent is me doing just dumb things that make people laugh."

But conceptually, it's usually done pretty well.”

Emmonia is a performer with a unique style, and locally, having a diverse style is the name of the game.

“Drag isn't only what you see on TV,” Emmonia says. “Drag locally is so much different. It is as diverse as any music because there are so many music genres— folk, country, early 2000s scene, whatever.”

A pandemic debut came with its own difficulties— venues closed to in-person interactions couldn't offer physical performances. Instead, Emmonia found community online through Instagram competitions and online shows in the Edmonton drag scene.

“The online stratosphere, it's very different from the in-person,” Emmonia says. “For a lot of my numbers, I would make music video parodies, things like that, that were not necessarily a live performance but were more of an actual edited production.”

For most people, drag performers included, the onset of the pandemic meant a re-evaluation of goals, priorities, and relationships.

“I think it really made people reflect on if they wanted to do it or not,” Emmonia says. “A lot of people quit. It really showed who wanted to do it, and maybe for whom it wasn't something they fully enjoyed.”

Emmonia says that the pandemic re-evaluation has led to something of a drag resurgence in Edmonton, with a return of high calibre aesthetics born out of necessity from the Instagram drag scene.

“Having all this time on Instagram, and not being able to perform, if you wanted to make yourself stand out, you had to be posting looks and stuff of what you were doing,” Emmonia says. “Having a whole conceptual look with hair and makeup to match whatever performance you're doing, I think that before it wasn't absolutely necessary, whereas now, there's definitely a higher calibre of drag looking for that.”

Alongside resulting in a higher calibre of drag looks and performances, Emmonia says that the pandemic has resulted in more opportunities and inclusivity for amateurs through Evolution and Party Queens.

“I think the pandemic kind of reset everything and put a new perspective on drag, and I think it

made us all appreciate how much we want to be in the same place performing together,” Emmonia says. “Whereas before, it may have been a little bit more competitive.”

“I think beforehand, we didn't understand that everything could be taken away from us in a minute, and now, we understand the importance of uplifting and supporting and coming to each other's shows.”

“People are just so excited to go out and see drag shows now,” Emmonia says. “The community is just really electric now.”

Looking to find out more about drag in Edmonton or about getting started as an amateur?

Check out [@partyqueensyeg](#) on Instagram for information on upcoming shows and events in Edmonton, and send them a DM if you're interested in getting started with an amateur show.

You can also find Emmonia on [@emmonia_yeg](#) on Instagram.

Curious about what's going on at Evolution? You can find them at [@evowonderlounge](#) on Instagram.