



BENEATH THE SEQUINED SURFACE

An Insight into Sydney Drag

BY CAROL LANGLEY

'This is an authoritative and highly readable book that introduces for the general reader an exotic and absorbing subject, and offers readers who are already familiar with the subject new material and new insights.'

John McCallum theatre reviewer, *Australian*

Sydney and drag form a natural alliance – the brisk, glittering city on the edge of a stunning harbour and the glamorous, biting performance style that thumbs its nose at convention. Both are vamps and long-time cohorts. And, like the city, while drag can be tawdry and crude, it can also be magical.

Drag is an integral part of Australian culture, and Sydney drag – highly creative and immensely professional – is said to be the best in the world. ***Beneath the Sequined Surface*** captures the colour and vibrancy of this art and gives a rare insight into the reality of this often-stereotyped scene. It presents a short international history of drag performance and drag theory, followed by a history of Sydney drag. It then profiles ten of the city's leading drag queens who stand out because of the individuality of their personas, backgrounds, perspectives and acts.

In this lavishly illustrated book we meet Claire de Lune, Vanity Faire, Polly Petrie, Mitzi Macintosh, Dorreen Manganini, Verushka Darling, Maxi Shield, Miss 3D, Joyce Maynge and Portia Turbo, and the men behind them. In these candid portraits the artists talk about their backgrounds and skills, the rituals that precede their performances and the relationship between the private and public personas.

Beneath the Sequined Surface is a fascinating book which illuminates the appeal of drag to a wide range of audiences and celebrates its invaluable contribution to Sydney's night life.

Beneath the Sequined Surface: An Insight into Sydney Drag

ISBN: 0 86819 767 X Size: 210mmx 290mm/168 pages RRP \$70.00 Paperback (with gatefold cover)
Illustrated with over 100 photos including 56 pages of colour



CAROL LANGLEY grew up on Sydney's northern beaches and has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Sydney. Following a career in information technology, she has worked for eight years as a freelance business writer and on personal writing projects.

In 2001 she gained a Master of Arts in Theatre from the University of New South Wales and is currently researching a doctorate on drag performance. ***Beneath the Sequined Surface*** is her first book.

CAROL LANGLEY IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS
INFORMATION: DEBORAH FRANCO
TEL: 02-9310 8206 EMAIL: franco@currency.com.au

**CLAIRE DE LUNE:** *Spotlighting the man*

Claire de Lune is a loud, flirty, lusty, naughty French party girl of a certain age with a penchant for champagne and cute young men. An incompetent lip-syncher and rather casual in her attitude towards learning the words of the songs in her act, she's earned a position at the top of professional drag via groundbreaking show formats, energy and drive. What is particularly captivating about Claire, whether she's performing in a risqué micro-mini, a sexy silver lamé evening gown or a garish 1960s pantsuit, is a marked masculine essence—and her constant hints at the man behind her act.

VANITY FAIRE: *The vision beautiful*

Vanity Faire is all about beauty—she is a picture, a look, a pose. She's young, stylish, successful, poised and confident—a supermodel. She can be a bitch, but she's harmless. She can be a lady—and yes, she can be a tramp!

POLLY PETRIE: *Rude, lewd and crude*

Polly Petrie is a 54-year old drag character whom, it seems, has every possible ailment from Alzheimer's to incontinence while still maintaining glamour. Her aspiration to 'poshness', however, will probably remain just that! She's loud and crude yet, on occasion, oddly sensitive. Flaunting soft pale skin, a feminine demeanour and a flashy costume, she transfixes her audience with big eyes and a dangerous smile.

MITZI MACINTOSH: *Comedy Queen*

Mitzi Macintosh is theatrical, technicolour and larger than life. Everything about her is big and bold—her eyes, her smile, her costumes, her productions. She's exuberant and whimsical and very Australian—a comedienne who sports the broadest Strine and a 'she's apples—who cares—it doesn't matter' approach to life.

DORREEN MANGANINI: *Brio and bush tales*

Dorreen Manganini is pretty, petite and bubbly, with an impish smile and a ton of cheek. She's the Aboriginal girl from the outback—sometimes from Arnhem Land, sometimes from Moree. Her story changes in the telling—myths woven through a warm, wholehearted, down-to-earth performance.

VERUSHKA DARLING: *Irony and subversion*

With broad shoulders, shapely hips and fine features, Verushka Darling makes up into a stunning Amazon. Yet the key to her act is the destruction of beauty, ironic juxtaposition and the subversion of traditional drag. Her character is at the same time sexy and proper, glamorous and kooky. She's known for being well put together—perfect make-up, hair and outfit—though she is not bound to a particular style, and can appear in modern, funky or period costume, in day or evening wear, with equal appeal.

MAXI SHIELD: *Voluptuousity and verve*

She's pretty, plump and girly—an immaculately made-up doll that even sounds like a woman. She's got a wicked smile, crowd-pleasing vivacity and the ability to lead her spectators to the line of bad taste, then nudge them over it.

MISS 3D: *Fantasy and performance arts*

Extravagant, droll, unorthodox, provocative—just when you believe you've figured Miss 3D out, she'll turn on a performance that challenges you to rethink. She's renowned for her magnetic grin, her extraordinary costumes and props, her penchant for the fantastical and her innovation.

JOYCE MAYNGE: *The Aussie Battler*

Joyce Maynge could be your favourite auntie. A long-time resident of Albion Park Rail, a small township on the south coast of NSW, she's into bingo, bowls, macramé and extreme sports. She's renowned for her feminist streak and her strong political beliefs, and beneath the daggy op-shop dresses and lurid accessories, lies a spirit that's always been ahead of her time.

PORTIA TURBO: *Sultry glamour*

Portia Turbo would have been a rebellious schoolgirl—the kind always being suspended for smoking or cavorting with the boys behind the bushes. She's tough, warm and biting. In her own words, she's a 'scrubber made good'. She's quite gorgeous to look at, but the rough edges remain—and that's her appeal. Portia embodies the movie star glamour of a small home town actress who nearly succeeded in Tinseltown—one who is now just that little bit older than the starlet, and uses her street-smarts and talent to stay ahead of the game.