

# Drag proves important to sophomore's identity

Molly Lubbers

Editor-in-Chief

"It's Raining Men" blares in the background as she twirls and flounces across the room, creating her own storm with her movements. When she pauses, the fabric of her dress whips around her as wind might, as if she's in the eye of a tornado of her own making—and perfectly comfortable in it. Her red lips mouth the words "leave those umbrellas at home" and she lets the intensity behind her stare linger before fluttering her eyelashes and moving again.

Her fierce personality is reflected in her name—Sinnamon Cleopatra Chase—but behind the make-up, wig, and dress is sophomore Auden Henning. For him, drag isn't just a form of art, but something important to his identity.

The first time Henning wore make-up was extremely public; it was applied to his middle school lunchroom. According to Henning, some people accepted it or ignored him, but others were negative.

"There were some guys who were my friends, and one of them called me disgusting, and they left the room," Henning said. "They went into the hallway, which was a little bit sad, because one of them was a close friend, and he told me, 'get away from me while you're in that.'"

Despite the reactions, Henning was compelled to try full drag. He thrifted dresses, borrowed make-up, and clipped scarves to his head until he was able to buy his first wig.

Part of drag is cultivating style, but another piece is the performance. When he practices at home, he focuses more on the latter.

"Right now, what I do, if there's a song I like that's sung by a woman, I'll sing it or lip-sync to it in my living room at 2:30 in the morning," Henning said.

Most drag queens create a persona; Henning goes by Sinnamon and uses she/her pronouns while in drag, though he admits he is still developing his aesthetic. He mainly models himself after the women he knows and admires and automatically becomes more feminine in drag.

"Something weird about drag is once you're in it, you don't even realize it, but you sort of develop a persona," Henning said. "You're already doing something that's taboo a little bit and so it brings

out the part of your personality that maybe you don't bring out too often."

The difference between how Henning acts and how Sinnamon does is distinct, but a common thread of boldness remains. Henning is sharp and passionate, willing to say exactly what he thinks in a frank way. But Sinnamon's presence fills whole the room; she commands your attention and is almost hypnotic when she moves. Every gesture feels deliberate, making you want to watch what she'll do next.

And when Henning is in public in drag, he doesn't hold back. According to him, it's been freeing, since it forces him to be completely open.

"You literally have no choice but to put everything out on the table in front of strangers, and people you know, and people who like you and people who hate you," Henning said. "You just have to throw it all out there."

Last year, Henning came to school in full drag because he decided to perform the role of Juliet during his English class's reading of Romeo and Juliet. He felt conflicting emotions surrounding the experience.

"The feeling of walking through the halls in a dress and wig and make up is a very, very unique feeling. Because you get the personal thing of I've accepted myself and I'm OK with showing myself to the world, and then you get the part of, 'everybody's staring at me; I want to curl up and die.' It's kind of a lonely feeling too, because you're kind of dying to be around people so you have a bit of a shield, but it doesn't stop people staring at you," Henning said. "I wanted to bring to light that the people who do drag more, they do that all the time, and they feel that feeling all the time constantly. To the people who find it weird, try to remember that when we just walk out in public like that and you're not at a drag show, try to understand that's what we're feeling whenever you look at us and whisper about us."

For Henning, drag is foremost for himself, not the people around him. He doesn't care whether or not you like him. He's found confidence through the art, and refuses to apologize for that.

"Drag definitely helped me accept myself more. You learn a lot about yourself when you're not yourself," Henning said. "You bring out a part of yourself that you didn't know was there."



## Sophomore Auden Henning's Make-Up Process

