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The journey begins in New York. It was here, in the legendary Club Casanova, that the Young Wild Ones began writing Drag King history under the Master of Ceremonies Mo B. Dick. We meet the Haitian-American Mildred, who works in an office during the day and in the evening, as the sexy Dréd, mesmerizes her fans with her songs. Here, too, we encounter the most famous Drag King of Germany, Bridge Markland, who is constantly on the lookout for provocation and anything extreme and who ponders about her bi-sexual identity. And we come across the traces of Drag King pioneer Diane Torr, who lives with her 16 year old daughter in New York. Long before it became trendy, she was one of the initiators of the King movement and has been giving performances and workshops for over two decades. We accompany Torr, transformed into one of her masculine alter egos and, through her, discover the secrets of masculine body and power strategy.

Del LaGrace Volcano, who lives in London, has personally experienced how limited social acceptance is for "MenWomen". Up until a few years ago, his name was still Della Grace, and with him we enter into the world of bodily transformation. He belongs to a group of transgendered men in London who are experimenting with testosterone, who also sometimes describe themselves as Cyborgs. They speak openly and directly about their experiences and yearnings. In London we examine the question, with Del's assistance, of what it means to be a *new man*. Del's path is an unusual one. He tries to lead a life between man and woman, which means he is constantly compelled to create new terms and new life situations. Hans, his friend, has chosen to continue his life for the time being as a man. He found it too complicated to live somewhere between man and woman. Our encounter with the new men in London forces us to confront the basic understanding of what is man and what is woman and how confusing this can be.

The film takes place within the framework of a Drag King night in a New Yorker Club ("Slipper Room"), where Kings, Queens and the entire *Kingdom* come together, dreaming of a time in which repressive sexual norms disappear.

«Je suis l'autre» ("I am the other"). Gérard de Nerval

INTERVIEW WITH GABRIEL BAUR

(full version on www.venusboyz.net)

Gabriel Baur, what inspired you to make a film about Drag Kings?

G.B.: Don't we all dream of slipping into the skin of the opposite sex? Of experiencing so-called "maleness" as a woman? In 1996 I heard about women who appear on stage as men and this, as I was told, with lots of black humour. The very next morning, when I woke up, I booked a ticket to New York... Ever since I was very young I was fascinated by the question: What if everyone wore green glasses and no one even noticed it? The question of social norms and transcending them, the question of identity and gender have always formed a central aspect of my film work. I have been fascinated by the question of how society defines such terms as "masculine / feminine", e.g., what it associates with "the woman" as opposed to "the man" and I used this theme in earlier projects and films – DIE BETTKÖNIGIN, LULUTOPIA or CADA DIA HISTORIA. VENUS BOYZ was a logical continuation.



How did you research for the film?

G.B.: I began my research in New York and it didn't take long for me to see that the Drag King shows were far more than simple entertainment. I made the acquaintance of the Drag Kings. They were women with great personality, like the Drag King pioneer Diane Torr, who examined social power structures and discussed them with much reflection in her workshops and discussions. Or Dréd Gerestant, a member of the younger generation, who is trying to live her life completely differently.

But you didn't only film in New York.

G.B.: No. In the course of my research activities, I came to London, where I met women who had just begun to take testosterone. This added a new dimension to the theme. In the moment in which the external transformations become inscribed in the bodies, the matter becomes more basic, more existential. My encounter with the new, so-called transgendered men in London deeply shook my understanding of "maleness" and "femaleness" and convinced me that I must absolutely make this film. And it should be a feature film.