

## **Jupiter Gallaxxi's Eternal Universe**

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*Anika Ljung*

It was as if time stopped when her silhouette emerged in the doorway. Under bright blue stage lights and amidst a hazy blur of faux fog, she stepped into the bar and onto the crowded dance floor — a mundane act that only she, Jupiter Gallaxxi, could make look other-worldly.

It's a Tuesday night at C'mon Everybody, a queer owned and operated bar in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Since its doors opened in 2015, the space has hosted members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies who flock for drag shows, DJ sets, standup routines and Ru Paul's Drag Race watch parties. Most popular among the nightly crowds of eager partygoers is the stage, complete with a metallic backdrop and disco ball hung above the center of the dance floor. This particular Tuesday finds that dance floor filled with people dressed for Christina Aguilera night; leather jumpsuits, silver shorts, feather boas and, most striking, Jupiter's all-black ensemble — a billowing cape of black tulle and ribbon, draped with her flowing, long dark hair.

It's her first night performing at C'mon Everybody, but Jupiter is no stranger to the stage. She has been a lifelong dancer, finding her love for Broadway as a child as she helped backstage during productions. This translated into the desire to perform, and Jupiter auditioned (and was booked) for the Broadway revival of *Godspell* at age 12, solidifying her role in the professional world. Since her first drag performance as Angel in *Rent* on Broadway at only 14, she has been a New York City drag queen for four years, finding herself in all corners of the city, from Manhattan to Queens to Brooklyn. "Of everywhere I've performed, Brooklyn is my favorite," Jupiter says. "The queer community here is so strong."

Tonight, Jupiter is one in a lineup of nine queens set to take the stage. The New York drag queen community runs deep, and everyone knows (or knows of) everyone. "The drag scene is very much about who you are and how you treat people in combination

with your performance,” says Miranda Levy, Jupiter’s girlfriend and manager. “It’s an intense career that involves a big time commitment and ‘proving yourself’ to other queens and the audience.” While their choice of attire makes each queen distinctive, they all have one thing in common: not a strand of hair or speck of makeup is out of place. For drag queens, this dedication to transforming their appearance is not only a hobby, but an investment. “The average person may put about ten dollars worth of makeup on their face a day,” says Jupiter. “When I’m in drag, I have upwards of fifty dollars of makeup on. Not to mention the cost of all my wigs and costumes.”

All of this adds up, and while excited attendees may see only a flawless face, flowing hair and elaborate attire, what’s beneath that is a regular person working overtime to make ends meet. When the makeup is rubbed off and the black cape exchanged for a sweatshirt, Jupiter becomes Alec Gallazzi, a 22 year-old working at a dance supply store. Her drag queen persona provides extra income, made all the more necessary since a house fire in August destroyed the majority of her most expensive wigs and costumes and all the makeup — a collection she’d been slowly building for two years. The perfect image for drag, complete with false lashes, heels, corsets, and enough glitter to go around, doesn’t come cheap. “Like a lot of people, we rely largely on tips,” says Jupiter. “When I pay for hair, makeup, clothes, and transportation for a show to walk away with only 15 dollars in tips, it feels like a loss.”

Not only does Jupiter put time, money and effort into the drag shows themselves, she, like a lot of other queens, cross-trains in her own time. She takes ballet classes regularly at Steps on Broadway, the style’s poise and technique clearly reflected in her fluid movement and confident posture on stage. She prides herself on being a dancer, incorporating pirouettes, splits and even backflips in her routines, a crowd favorite.

On this particular Tuesday, Jupiter delivers her own special performance of Christina Aguilera’s “What a Girl Wants”. She slinks onto the stage, mic in hand as her cape drapes behind, creating an air of mystery and anticipation. At the song’s climax, Jupiter sensually unites a single silk ribbon, pulling the tulle off to reveal a black bra and pant

set, its sparkles reflecting vividly in the pink and blue lights. She turns, flips and lands in the splits — a breathtaking image of sultry artistry and talent — before she collects bills from excited fans as she makes her way across the stage. And as she strides offstage, Jupiter blows a kiss to the audience, pocketing her cash before throwing on her cape and sweeping back through the doorway into the cold October night.