



## Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret

*Leila J. Rupp, Verta Taylor*

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It's Saturday night in Key West and the Girlie Show is about to begin at the 801 Cabaret. The girls have been outside on the sidewalk all evening, seducing passersby into coming in for the show. The club itself is packed tonight and smoke has filled the room. When the lights finally go down, statuesque blonds and stunning brunettes sporting black leather miniskirts, stiletto heels, and see-through lingerie take the stage. En Vogue's "Free Your Mind" blares on the house stereo. The crowd roars in approval.

In this lively book, Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor take us on an entertaining tour through one of America's most overlooked subcultures: the world of the drag queen. They offer a penetrating glimpse into the lives of the 801 Girls, the troupe of queens who perform nightly at the 801 Cabaret for tourists and locals. Weaving together their fascinating life stories, their lavish costumes and eclectic music, their flamboyance and bitchiness, and their bawdy exchanges with one another and their audiences, the authors explore how drag queens smash the boundaries between gay and straight, man and woman, to make people think more deeply and realistically about sex and gender in America today. They also consider how the queens create a space that encourages camaraderie and acceptance among everyday people, no matter what their sexual preferences might be.

Based on countless interviews with more than a dozen drag queens, more than three years of attendance at their outrageous performances, and even the authors' participation in the shows themselves, *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret* is a witty and poignant portrait of gay life and culture. When they said life is a cabaret, they clearly meant the 801.

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