

LEARNING TO Slay

A PHOTO ESSAY ABOUT WISCONSIN'S TEEN DRAG QUEENS

BY RUTHIE HAUGE

Bailey Mosling, 15, describes himself as “painfully shy.”

When Bailey becomes Nemo, the stage name he takes for drag shows, “it’s easier to talk to people.”

“When I’m backstage, people know who I am,” Bailey said. “It’s less awkward.”

Bailey, a transgender boy, performs regularly at shows at FIVE Nightclub in Madison. His friend Andy Schueler, 16, goes by Andi Withani on stage. As far as they know, Bailey and Andy are the only two drag teens in Wisconsin.

“I’ve definitely gained a lot of perspective,” Andy said. “Drag taught me that I should take up the space I’m given. It’s taught me to accept the feminine and masculine parts of myself.”

Bailey lives in Middleton with his mom, dad and older brother Logan, in a house with two dogs and four cats. Bailey was in seventh grade when he started his gender transition, and is now a sophomore in high school.

He began weekly testosterone injections earlier this year. Bailey hates needles, but he’s starting to get used to it.

Both Andy and Bailey go to charter schools — Bailey attends Clark Street Community School in Middleton, and Andy is a sophomore at Endeavor Charter High School in Watertown. They’re allowed to perform in nightclubs if a parent is present.

Both moms, as well as Bailey’s dad, sit right up front at drag shows to encourage the young queens with dollar tips (the traditional show of support). Adult drag queens have shared stories about the challenges of their lives growing up, and the lack of support from their own families.

The teens “represent a time and space for all

of these other adults, where they didn’t feel like they necessarily had the support,” said Dana Mosling, Bailey’s mom. “They’re able to see that support given to a teenager, and it’s almost doing some inner child healing for them.”

Andy’s mother, Sarah Schueler, said they were “lucky” to meet his drag mom, Cass Marie Domino, who helped them build a strong community. Andi Withani’s full drag name is Andi Withani Domino, to signify their relationship.

“I really work hard to surround us with the people that are going to be the most helpful to him,” Schueler said. “Not just in drag, but growing up and being a good person and being kind-hearted, loving everybody.”

Official details aren’t public yet, but Bailey was cast in an upcoming show on a cable network about drag kids, assisted by his “drag mom” Bianca Lynn Breeze (Madison’s own queen of drag bingo).

Lately, Andi’s been performing to a new mashup of Kesha songs. Nemo does a routine to “Space Oddity” by David Bowie and “Space Girl” by Frances Forever, and another one to “Nurse’s Office” by Melanie Martinez.

They both love watching other queens perform. When Andy turned 16 a few weeks ago, he celebrated with Nemo, with several adult drag queens in attendance. Bailey and his family have big plans for the future, including more all-ages drag shows.

“When I was a kid, I loved Selena Gomez, Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, all of it,” Andy said. “Now I get to perform as those icons. That’s really, really magical.” 🏳️

—Scott Girard contributed to this story



▲ **Above:** Nemo gets into costume for her number, set to “Nurse’s Office” by Melanie Martinez, at the 16th birthday drag show for Andi Withani at FIVE Nightclub.

ANDY | 16

Student at Endeavor Charter High School in Watertown.
Pronouns: He/his off stage.
She/Her in drag as Andi Withani.

BAILEY | 15

Student at Clark Street Community High School in Middleton.
Pronouns: He/his off stage.
She/Her in drag as Nemo.



► **Right:** Andi Withani performs to music by Madonna (the intro to her “Rebel Heart” tour, “Iconic”) in a homemade cage at Andi’s 16th birthday drag show at FIVE Nightclub.

▼ **Below:** Andy Schueler applies false eyelashes in the FIVE Nightclub dressing room as he transforms into his drag persona, Andi Withani.



► **Right:** Cass Marie Domino helps her drag “daughter,” Andy Schueler (stage name: Andi Withani Domino) apply makeup before Cass Marie’s 50th birthday party drag show at FIVE Nightclub.

◀ **Left:** Nemo collects a five dollar bill from her grandmother during a performance at FIVE Nightclub. Nemo’s mom, Dana Mosling, said parental support of the young queens is something the older drag queens often notice.

