





Drag impresario Andre A'dore (above left) told the boys: "Come as you aren't"-and the boys duly obliged, as you can see. But all is not sugar and spice. Says Superfly Production's drag competition king Barry Sullivan (above): "I don't want to be backstage when the winner is announced"

der grace among the Town Hall on February flamboyant throng. It was talent-spotting

posh knicker shop. On the rebound from such paradoxical pulchritude, I turned with relief to the organiser of this frolic, the incontestably feminine female. the limpidly lovely Andre A'dore. With her at my side I felt on safe

and what was which-

Fag Ash Lil,

all is for-

given. Like-

ground. But all too soon she deserted me to go and organise the contest for the most ladvlike lad.

I was on my own again, a lonely question mark in a room full of exclamation marks.

"Fantastic, isn't she?" said a voice as I watched Andre wend with slen"She's very down-to-

I nodded enthusiastic-

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earth," volunteered Barry. "A little camp, but a very good-looking boy. And she does do a

> tween two points. I mean . . . for a while there I had actually fancied "her".

superb Judy Garland."

I gulped nonchalantly

-try it-and took refuge

in my notebook. Be-

witched, bothered and

bewildered wasn't in it.

I felt squarer than the

square on the hypote-

nuse, straighter than the

shortest distance be-

Hell's bells!

Like I said, come back Fag Ash Lil and Co, with your bulging biceps, tarantula legs and five o'clock shadow that no amount of talc can hide.

No problems there. Dressing up has come to a pretty pass when you can't tell the girls from the "airls".

Andre's ball-in Queensway, would you believe. But with sophisticated drag currently packing them into the pubs and clubs, and classy drag shows from the States and France storming the West End in 1976, female impersonators no

All right, there were a

public approval. Now, anything goes.

## Goddesses

There were slinky seductresses, cuty pies, shy young things, elegant mannequins and sex goddesses of the silver screen at Andre's hall

Gentlemen all

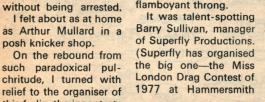
contestants are required few bizarre old bags at to parade in a fun outfit, then a swimsuit and finally an evening gown, judging will be on graciousness, poise and personality.

"They've got to look like sophisticated women," said Barry Sullivan. "We've invited every drag artist on the longer need to descend circuit and they've all to crude parody to court accepted. It will be the biggest night ever in this country, dragwise."

For the final, where

A condition of entry is "no false attributes". Explained Barry: "Some drag artists have got bigger breasts than women -and shapelier. Hormone drugs and plastic surgery

Continued





Winner Colette (Raymond Edwards) flanked by the runners-up. Another Diana Ross?

## Giving their all at the great drag ball

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are blurring the borderline between male and female."

First prize includes a Continental holiday for two, spending money, clothes voucher, record token, champagne and a cassette recorder.

"It is to be hoped," said Barry, tongue in cheek (I think), "that as a mark of respect for the Sex Discrimination Act, Miss London Drag will be invited to open fetes and attend functions during her term of office."

Queensway's chocolate-coffeecream trio automatically go through to the final.

Leading them will be Colette, who models herself on American singer Diana Ross. She has entered three drag contests to date—and won them all. When she is not Colette she is Raymond Edwards, aged 20, from Peckham.

Second-placed Louella—Malaysian freelance hairdresser Michael Lee—looked sensationally unsensational, if you see what I mean, in a simple frock, no jewellery and very little make-up.

Number three—a Sonja Henie blonde
—asked for her name to be withheld on
account of the fact that she works as a
secretary to a barrister and doesn't want
to lose her job!

The three of them posed in a friendly enough fashion for photographer Roger

Crump, but Barry told me that a terrific amount of needle goes on.

"When the winner is announced at Hammersmith Town Hall," he said, "I don't want to be backstage."

Why do they do it?

The answer seems to be that it's a fantasy escape. Most dragsters are gay and feel more glamorous when they slip into a flamboyant female role.

## Very relaxing

But one veteran dresser-up maintains: "There are a lot of what you would call perfectly normal people who find it very relaxing or relieving to put on women's clothes every so often."

Be that as it May or June or April, drag occasionally goes beyond mere dressing up and becomes an art. Andre can kick a gown as devastatingly as did ever Rita Hayworth or Ava Gardner. With her fashion model figure and melodious voice she makes Danny La Rue seem like Old Mother Riley.

And if you think I'm too easily taken in, I have to report that shortly after chatting to Andre I was approached by a demure drag debutante attired all in bridal white, who asked tentatively: "That person you were just talking to—it was a woman, wasn't it?"

Goodnight ladies, whoever you are.