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All Eyes On: Madison Elise

Self-taught drag queen heads to Kirksville each fall to host the Prism dance

BY ANNE REBAR
Staff Reporter

Bright lights, music, dancing and a whole lot of sparkle might sound like the recipe for an elaborate show in Vegas, but every semester it can be found in Kirksville hosted by the one and only Miss Madison Elise.

Madison Elise has been coming to Kirksville for six years to participate in the drag show hosted by Prism, Truman's Gay/Straight Alliance. This year's Prism dance is 10 p.m., Nov. 14th at the NEMO fair grounds with the drag show beginning at midnight. When she isn't performing for audiences across the Midwest or winning pageants, Madison Elise is 27-year-old St. Louis resident Tyler Hill.

A full time cosmetology student at Paul Mitchell The School — St. Louis, as well as a bartender at Attitudes nightclub, Hill said he first began doing drag at the age of 20, when he dressed up as a woman for a themed Halloween party.

"A month after dressing up on Halloween, I performed in an amateur drag night at Faces on Fourth Street, a club in East St. Louis," Hill said. "After about nine months I actually became the co-host of the show and began performing about four nights a week."

Becoming Madison Elise takes Hill about an hour and a half and includes hair, make-up, nails and costume. However, he said it wasn't always so easy.

"I always have done my own make-up, and in the beginning I looked pretty awful," Hill said. "Learning the whole process takes a long time, and though I could have sat down with some of the more seasoned entertainers to learn the ropes, I chose to learn by myself, just picking up tips here and there as I did it, which in the end I think was best for me."

After a year of performing four nights a week, Hill became the show director at the SPOT Bar and Grill in St. Louis, which made him the youngest director in the state. Although the bar closed down, it provided him with a contact who suggested he start doing pageants.

"It happened completely by accident, actually," Hill said. "While I was working as the director at a bar I met the owner of Miss Gay Missouri-America who suggested I get into pageants."

Since then, Hill has gone on to win or place in

eight different pageants, including winning Miss Gay St. Louis and becoming Queen of Pride St. Louis in 2008. Being Queen of Pride forayed into another avenue of opportunity for Hill.

"I began attending some of the St. Louis Pride board meetings as Queen of Pride, and after awhile the president at the time said he needed a marketing and PR director," Hill said. "Since I had been involved a lot because of doing drag for so many years, I took the position and have since become the vice president for the organization."

With school, bartending, pageants, Pride and drag shows, Hill said he is very busy, yet he said he still makes time to come up and host the drag show every semester at Truman's Prism dance. Hill said he began doing the show because some of his friends went here and asked him to come and help out because they knew he had experience. A year later, by accident, he took on the role as host.

"My friend Curtis was supposed to be hosting that year, but for some reason he disappeared halfway through the show and no one could find him, so I just took the mic and started going, and people seemed to like it," Hill said.

Hill's portion of the show usually includes classics from the 1970s and 1980s, as well as some Broadway tunes, although he said that sometimes inspiration for a number will strike simply from listening to the radio. When preparing for his show at Truman, he said he keeps in mind the younger audience and tries to pick songs people will like.

"For most of the shows I just wing it," Hill said. "After you do this for long enough it pretty much comes naturally, but some of the group numbers, like the Chicago tribute Tabbi Katt I did one year at Truman, and any numbers for pageants are usually a little more planned out."

Senior Claire Cook was in charge of getting talent for the Prism dance for two and a half years before passing on the responsibilities this semester. She said she always enjoyed working with Hill and that his show is always great.

"He is really interested in making the dance the best it can be," Cook said. "I remember one routine he did to a song from the musical 'Xanadu,' wearing roller skates, and it was amazing. The show is definitely a one-of-a-kind thing in Kirksville."

Senior Elise Bailey has attended three Prism dances since she has been at Truman and said the performers always impress her.

"Madison Elise is such a dynamic performer, she is so fun to watch on stage," Bailey said. "She always seems to know what to say to make everyone laugh and have a good time."



Photos courtesy of www.myspace.com/missmadisonelise

Madison Elise has been participating in Prism's Drag Show for years and said he uses the students' taste in music as inspiration for his performance.

Simple acts add up to major damage

BY ANNA MEIER
Columnist

What might seem like a harmless souvenir from campus actually could be stifling the endeavors of Truman and its organizations.

Little do most people know, students can be fined for taking down Student Activities Board event posters and also for picking flowers on campus. These seemingly marginal actions probably won't get students into trouble, but there's a distinct possibility that the flower they're taking home is part of a landscaping project that took days for the University staff to plant, and the poster could have taken weeks of work to design, print and hang up. Picking flowers and taking posters are two ways that students hurt the University, whether they realize it or not.

Sophomore Kelly Gorman is in charge of promotions for the SAB and said a lot of work goes into preparing publicity for the events the SAB sponsors.

"There are many different venues we have to

hit," Gorman said. "First we decide what kind of posters we want to hang up, then we have to contact all the areas we want to hang them, and we also have to take the sandwich boards, which are the large posters, throughout the campus," Gorman said. "It really varies on what event is going on, on how much we'll spend and stuff like that."

She said large amounts of time and energy go into promoting an event like the upcoming Regina Spektor concert because they have put up two sets of posters: one gives general information about the event itself, and another tells the students and faculty tickets have arrived and can be purchased. Gorman said that unfortunately it is these big projects that normally attract the attention of poster thieves.

"Normally our biggest issue is the posters that have pictures of the artist or the big venue event, and people will take them because they think they're cool," Gorman said. "Or like the Harry Potter ones last year, a lot of Harry Potter fans were like, 'Oh, I want a big Harry Potter to put in our room.'"

Gorman said the SAB has no problem with people taking posters after the event is over, and posters are left up after the event specifically for that purpose. Gorman also

said there are always a few extra posters in the SAB office that students could ask for if they really want a poster. Taking the posters before the events only detracts from the organization's efforts, she said.

"It's our main way of telling the student body what's going on," Gorman said. "So when someone takes a poster down ... it's kind of hurtful because you can't replace that, and it does detract away from the student body and their awareness. It just really hurts our ability to popularize our events when they're taken down before events, and it detracts from our trust in the student body and our desire to keep making the posters."

Cathy Sherron works at the University's Printing Services and assists in printing the posters for the SAB. Sherron said a standard color poster costs about 75 cents to produce, and a black-and-white costs fewer than 15 cents. So, by taking these posters, people are stealing something that cost money to produce. However, she still understands the stu-

dent's perspective in this situation.

"I know that people enjoy the posters, and if there are events going on they might want to keep the poster or possibly get a signature of the person," Sherron said.

Luke Mudd, head of campus landscaping, said the biggest effect students have on campus landscaping is the "cattle trails" that get dug into the grass by heavy foot traffic.

"I also realize, from the students' point of view, that everything's time sensitive," Mudd said. "They're trying to get from point A to point B as quick as possible. So far, so good. The sod we laid there this summer is still looking good, so we'll hope for the best there."

Mudd also said catching and penalizing someone for picking flowers or doing harm to the campus landscaping is difficult because the campus is open to everybody all day, every day. He has never noticed the flowers being picked before, but he would still like students to be respectful of them.

"I would like them to be courteous to everybody because we put them out there not only for Truman students and faculty but also for potential students," Mudd said. "So I'd like them to observe but don't take, so to speak."



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