

## **SOFANDA BOOZ**

Zanzibar Café – Chicago, IL

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Transcriber: Michael Anthony DeAnda

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[00:00:00]

Sofanda Booz [SB]: [chuckles] Thanks.

Michael DeAnda [MDA]: All Right, so let's get started.

SB: Okay.

MDA: Excellent. Great. So, it is January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018.

SB: February.

MDA: It is February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018

SB: [chuckles]. Off to a great start! [chuckles].

MDA: Wow, that was a great start. It is February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018. I am at Zanzibar Café with Sofanda Booz.

SB: Hello, Hello!

MDA: Thank you for joining me today.

SB: Absolutely! I'm excited.

MDA: Great! Okay, so let's start off talking about your drag career. How long have you been doing drag?

SB: I would say on-and-off, I've been doing drag for six or seven years. I actually didn't ever- The first time I ever did drag was for a performance or for public consumption other than like Halloween was as part of a GLBTQ theater company I was a part of, it's called Midtangeant Productions, and we were running for ten years and through them there were multiple shows where I ended up in drag, including—like the first show I was fully immersed in corsets and boobs and padding and makeup and wings and everything was a show called *Snow White and the Seven Drag Queens*.

MDA: [chuckles].

SB: So, it was a revival of the show that we did. I wasn't in the first iteration, I was in the revival of it. That was probably like seven/eight- Yeah maybe seven/eight years ago. And the show ran on and off for two years. Through that I kind of just learned from people around me, grew kind of—and then just slowly- Like it was all performance, I never considered myself a drag queen, I was like, "I'm an actor, and I'm doing drag for the show, so." I even wrote in the program, I'm like- 'Cause I was little- I was pretty busted so I'm just like, "I am not a drag queen, and I just want to make that clear." So, I put it in the program, "I am a drag actor, I'm a *dragtor*." Like, it's not what I am, so- But then it was funny because, like, because of that there were other opportunities that arose from it, like there was another opportunity where I got a chance to write a show. I wrote a show as part of that theater company with myself as the lead, because that's what you do, playing a woman in drag. So, again, not very pretty, but, like, funny. Like what I like doing was being on stage and doing comedy, and it was just- I found that I got a lot more mileage from being funny in a dress than being funny as a boy. So, yeah, that was kind of what- So theater is what started me down this, down this corseted path.

MDA: [chuckles]. That's a great way to put it.

SB: Yeah.

MDA: So, who inspires you to do, do drag, or what are your references when you're performing or getting ready?

SB: I mean, I- Really like for the past- Like when I started, like was just kind of doing it to do it, like it was like, you know, "Tell me what to do and I'll do it." Like, just learning from my friends, learning from people around me. So, like really just close friends that were in my tight little theater community and people who were in that show. There's one person specifically that, like, kind of helped me along, she was part of that theater company, she works at Kit Kat Lounge, her name is Madame X. And I don't call her- I call her my drag grandma, not my drag mother, because I make jokes that she's as old as a dinosaur, which is probably true. But, like I kind of started taking things from them, and it kind of informed a lot of my drag in terms of like- Like I look in my closet, 'cause I have a closet for me and I have a closet for Sofanda, and I look in my

closet. A lot of it was really borrowed, stolen [laughs], given. So, like, for a long time it was just kind of like I have a, I wasn't- I didn't really have, like, an inspiration itself. I was doing it to do it and doing it to entertain people. Like as long as the look was funny, and it made a visual impact, I didn't really care. But kind of over the past couple of years, I've been more and more inspired by the bearded drag community that has kind of come up. I don't necessarily model myself after them, but I do look at, look at them as kind of like—I want to say “pioneers,” I don't think that's the right term—but like, I look at them as inspiration, not necessary like a dra- like a visual inspiration because I'm not modeling myself after their clothing styles or their whatever. But I look at them as kind of people who are really leading a path to major acceptance for, like, someone like a bearded queen. To go back to like *Snow White and the Seven Drag Queens*, when I started that show, I had to shave for it, and I had to shave my beard every single week. And then I convinced my director to let me do it bearded, and so I- because I had been seeing more and more bearded queens, so like, like Lucy Stool, Hellvetika, JerFay, some of the girls down at The Call, things like that. So, like it kind of became more- Drag over the past few years has started to diversify so much that *everything is drag*. Like- Those are kind of the ones who inspired me. Style-wise, I still kind of just, [chuckles] I still kind of go with whatever I think is pretty, or I go on these little, like, “journeys.” Right now I'm on this 50's-housewife journey just with where I'm at in my life, and just because it's a style I always wanted to kind of delve into. But my biggest thing about my look and my style and the inspiration I get is really from, I think, what I'm doing. Like my biggest inspiration is to make sure that I am larger than life, entertaining as hell, and that I'm not just, you know, a pretty girl in a dress, because as it is I'm a bearded, I'm a bearded lady, so I've already, like, broken that, so I'm like, “I'm not going to be fishy, I'm not going to be cute” but I want to make sure that, like, if I'm, if I'm already exaggerating drag to the point where I'm like a bearded queen, everything else is exaggerated too. Make sense?

MDA: Yeah, yeah that does.

SB: Okay [laughs].

MDA: So, you mentioned kind of keeping separate spaces for your clothing and your means of expression.

SB: Mmhmm [affirmative].

MDA: All right, I'd like to ask about your pronouns.

SB: Yeah!

MDA: If you use different pronouns when you're in drag versus when you're not. Or what pronouns do you use, how about we start there?

SB: [Laughs]. I do, like, use “she” and “her” when I'm in drag, refer to myself as a lady. But I mean when I'm in drag I also refer to myself, you know- I'm the first one to take the piss on myself. I'm just like, my whole mentality when I'm up there telling jokes is like, I best, like, make a joke about myself first before someone else thinks that, you know I'm taking this all too seriously, because I'm *not!* I'm there to entertain people, I'm there to make people laugh. But- But I definitely use, like, the she/her pronouns. All my drag queen friends, it's “she/her” not usually him, 'cause I call, I call my drag queen friends by their drag queen names: it's not “Nate,” it's “Specificity”; it's not “Colby,” it's “Tequila”; it's not “Drew,” it's “Dixie”; it's like, I don't call them by their- Unless I met them, like in a separate part of my life, then I usually call them by she/her. And I think that's also synonymous just with, like, gay culture as well. I think like a lot of my just gay friends who aren't in drag, I'm still calling her, “her” or “she,” you know it's just a, I don't know, almost colloquialism of Gay Culture at this point to be like, “Oh girl!” or, you know, something like that. So, I mean it's, it's beyond just, I think it's beyond just being a drag queen, I think it's just part of, part of who I've grown up and become as a gay man and the culture I'm immersed in currently.

MDA: So, do you have a lot of, a lot of people who refer to you as “Sofanda?”

SB: Oh yeah!

MDA: Okay.

SB: Ooooh Yeah!

MDA: Even when you're out of drag?

SB: [Laughs] Yeah!

MDA: Okay. What's that like?

SB: I'm fine with it because like- Especially people at the bar, people at SoFo, they're, "Oh Sofanda!" or, "Hey, call Sofanda!" or "Sofanda needs this." Or like, I'll come in and, you know, they're like, "Hey Sofanda!" you know. It's, it's fine for me because, like, it's actually kind of a little pat on the back because then it's just like I know that I have over the past few years really taken a different look at my drag and a really different look at my drag career which is almost exclusively toward drag queen bingo—and we can get to that in a minute. But it makes me feel- it lets me know that they- I always had a worry that- especially when I started doing drag, and when I started doing bingo that- I still have a worry when I'm up there that people aren't going to see me as a drag queen, people aren't going to see me as pretty, people aren't going to see me as any kind of illusion—that I'm just a man in a dress. But, like, it kind of shows me that, you know, I'm not the most polished queen in the world, but it shows me that they're still buying into the illusion, they're still buying what I'm selling. So, I mean it kind of is a little, like from them an unknowing not that, "I like who you are Sofanda, and I like what you're doing," and you know, kind of a validation, if it makes sense.

[00:11:13]

MDA: It, it does.

SB: Okay.

MDA: It does. I- I know that the term "drag" is, is really contested, and there's kind of a murky are that kind of surrounds it.

SB: Mmhmm [agreeing].

MDA: Especially when we're talking about, like, validation.

SB: Yeah.

MDA: And what types are really- Like what performances and things, like what you do is really considered "drag," right?

SB: Yeah.

MDA: To you, how would you classify- Or how would you define "drag?" Let's start there.

SB: Hmmm [pensive].

MDA: Like what is "drag" to you?

SB: Drag- Well that's a two-pronged answer because I think to really define what I define "drag" now, I'd have to define what I thought drag was then.

MDA: Sure.

SB: Like, when I, you know, even when I was in this GLBT theater company, you know, for example, you know, I was in a show, and I was getting in wigs and corsets and putting on makeup and heels and I was "the drag queen." But then we have the female actors who are also getting in wigs and corsets and makeup and heels and getting on stage, but for me they weren't a drag queen. I have a friend who is a female drag queen, performs all over the city—all over the country really, she's amazing. And I met her through this theater company that we had this debate about a few years ago about- 'Cause she's like, "I'm a drag queen." I was like, "You're not a drag queen. You're not a drag queen. You're a *woman*. Like, you're at a unfair disadvantage. Like, you don't- You have big old tits. You don't- You don't, like, even have to, like, do that. Like, you have to do so much less. It's not giving me the illusion of being a woman; you *are* a woman. You are enhancing it, and you're making it, making it larger than life, but, you know, that's not what it is." And it took me a while to come around to- And I think everything that's been happening in the drag community over the past few years, especially in Chicago—Chicago is one of the most diverse drag communities I've *ever* seen—about, you know, the rise of, like, bearded queens and genderfuck and what started off as the term "bio-queens," which I

don't know if that a legitimate term anymore, like if that has just grown into drag queens. Like, I don't even really think of anybody who- any of those label subsets as like, "Oh well, you're a 'genderfuck drag queen,'" "Oh, you're a, a 'female drag queen.'" Like it's just like "drag queen." Like drag to me at this point is- Drag to me is taking that person that's inside and putting it on the outside; that person who isn't, isn't on the exterior every single day, but who lives inside and is, like, burning bright, and however creative way you want to *express that* for the world to see, then that's drag. Like, I can- There are people who dress in drag for work, like, in their nine-to-five, you know: they get done up; they-they put their hair up; they do their makeup; they put on the- [mic slips] oop! Sorry about that.

MDA: [chuckles].

SB: They put on the, you know, put on the heels; put on the clothes; put on whatever; put on the suit and slick their hair, whatever like if they're a guy, like—and that's like their work drag. Like, I feel like drag is so much more than, it's just an enhancement of yourself, and for *me*, it's always been like the best person you can be and the person you maybe always wanted to be but [chuckles] but can't always be. I try and live my life- I try and be consistent- a consistent character as a person from day to night, but I'll tell you that- Like, I still- I still tell stupid jokes, I still laugh at myself, I'm still self-deprecating. But when I get on a microphone, it all kind of- the volume gets turned up to eleven.

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: You know, so. 'Cause it's all the best parts of me put out there full-force. And I think a lot of people do that too. Like drag is an expression of yourself and your heart and your passion. And so [laughs]. It's so stupid to say it, but I so realized over the past few months how passionate I am about [laughs] about fucking bingo [laughs].

MDA: That's great!

SB: [still laughing] I'm not kidding. It's so dumb! But like-

MDA: I don't see why. I mean, I'm writing a dissertation chapter on it.

SB: Yeah, you're writing a dissertation on it. Obviously, there's something to it. Obviously, I'm not the only one that's passionate about Bingo. But like, it's just- It was just such a revelation, and when I realized that, I was just like- It was just like, "God! I can just, like, have even more fun doing it!" Because, like I work a nine-to-five job, you know, that I like; otherwise I wouldn't be there. I love the people I work with. They know about Sofanda; they've come to see her multiple times. But there's just, like I said, just this freeing energy I feel when I'm up there with a microphone and getting to do what I do because I love performing and, more than anything—and I say this about my acting career—is I love making people laugh. It is the most important thing to me. Like, I get so scared when people don't laugh. I'm like, "Aaaaah!" [shrill]. And that's probably related to some kind of like- That's a different whole thing about validation and drag queens, you know, needing some kind of validation. And there's a whole other story. But, you know, everybody's got their insecurities, and everybody's got that. But like, when I was acting, I didn't like doing dramas because I didn't know if I was doing a good job.

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: You know, I'm not going to hear the audience crying. But when I'm out there, and I'm acting a fool, and I hear somebody laugh or somebody comes up to me after a show and they're just like: "you were really funny"; "you were really great"; "thank you so much"; "here's a twenty dollar bill," which has happened—which needs to happen more, quite frankly, *damn it!* [Laughs].

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: But, like, you know, I like- I've always been a guy who likes tangible results, and I like to know the effort I'm putting in is worth something to somebody. So- And like I said, I require constant validation, and I'm completely insecure, and [laughs]. And that's why I do drag.

MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: [Laughs] And that's drag to me.

MDA: So, I- I'm interested-

SB: Yeah [coughs].

MDA: Because earlier you said that-

SB: [coughs].

MDA: -you're drag career's basically been priming you for doing drag bingo.

SB: Yeah.

MDA: I- I want to hear about that.

SB: Oh my god!

MDA: Like what was that trajectory like?

SB: Oh god.

MDA: What were the milestones for that?

SB: It was the dumbest thing. So, *Snow White and the Seven Drag Queens* literally was like- Opened so many doors for me, so I met a lot people in my life at that time because of that show, during that show. And there was one time where a friend said, "Hey, my girlfriend's friend is looking for a drag queen to host Bingo. And, you know, I thought of you." And I'm just like, "I mean I've been to drag queen bingo, you know. I've been to some really *bad* drag queen bingo, I've been to some really good drag queen bingo too." But, like, I also never thought of just like, "That's going to be me some day!" I never thought of that. But then this opportunity fell in my lap to do Bingo [laughs]. And the best part was- was that it at a straight bar. Oh yeah! It was at a straight bar in North Center. Do you know where North Center is?

[00:20:16]

MDA: I don't.

SB: *Exactly!*

MDA: Okay.

SB: Exactly.

MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: So, you know where Lincoln Square is? It's kind of just south of Lincoln Square.

MDA: Okay.

SB: It was just north of Irving Park off of Lincoln. And basically, they just said they wanted a Bingo night. And then I didn't even know if they wanted a drag queen because they like- all their communication was just like, "Yeah, we're looking for someone to host Bingo." I was like, "Mmmkay..."

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: So, I came in and I was just like, I had this little presentation, and I was like, "I want to do this, and then we'll do this and blah blah blah blah blah. And we'll call it 'Dirty Bingo' and I'm going to bring in a little guest host every week," because I had to have a fucking security blanket of somebody being there with me. And, I, like, just got through their presentation, I was expecting, like, *questions* or, like, *reservation*, and "*it's a straight bar*". And they're like, "Okay great! Sounds good! You know, sounds like you know what you're doing, so I guess we'll see you in two weeks, or three weeks, and we'll get started and start advertising and then go from there." I was like- I was like, "This was easy." I'm like, "Okay! I just got recommended for it, made my- wrote my own fucking ticket, and then now I'm hosting Bingo at a straight bar." So, the first- That first gig lasted, god, like six months or so—every week for six months at a straight bar.

MDA: Oh wow!

SB: At the straight bar, and then they just- And there were ups and downs, there were some good- good nights, some bad nights. It was also in the middle of nowhere. You know, it's like a ten-minute walk to the train from there. So, like, you know, I could only do so much to get- I can't get all my friends there every single week.

MDA: Mhmm [understanding].

SB: I can't even do that now at SoFo. I can't get my friends there all the time. And, I don't know, for whatever reason they decided, "We don't want- We're not going to continue." So, after six months- And it was after my birthday show too. It was just like, *I had that place fucking packed!*  
MDA: [laughs].

SB: And it was like 200 people, and so many people, and they made so much money! And they're like, "Oh, we decided to take a break from Bingo." And I'm like- And I got really butt-hurt about it, and very- They're just like, "Well, kind- We'll talk about it in the next few months." And it didn't happen again, and then- So that was like August of, what, twenty—I'm trying to remember—August of 2016. And then around the time- And then I didn't really do anything with it. And then I was just working with my theater company, but then *Snow White* ended. So, drag was just *done* for me. I had been- I'm like, "Okay well now what?" 'Cause I had this closet full of clothes, I was ready to pack it all up and be done with it and then I remember getting a call in like Sept- No, I'm- No, that was 2015 when it ended. And then in 2016, I got a call from the girl who was the bartender and she was the manager of the bar that I was at, and she was like, "Hey! I want to bring back Bingo!" And I'm like, "Okay!" So, she's like- So we decided to do it every other week. And then I did that from, what was that? shit, December 2016 through September of 2017, every other week. And then in between that time, I had made- made lots of friends from that gig and then I started filling in at Atmosphere Bar when my- my drag sister Christina Rose started getting a gig there, and then she's like, when she had night's off, she's like, "Hey, can you fill in?" I was like, "Okay, great!" So that was my first taste ever doing- So I had been doing it for a straight audience and occasional gay people would come there 'cause I invited them, and- But now I started doing it in a gay bar, and I'm just like, "*What is this magical world I'm in?*"

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: "I can make dick jokes and pussy jokes and"- I say all these things that like- I was still at the straight bar- I realized that I was still holding things back, and I was still kind of not a hundred percent comfortable because, like, you're in a straight bar, you're in a little tavern or in a little, like, pub, not expecting a bearded lady to come up to you and be like, "*Hey, wanna play Bingo?*"

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: And it's like- A lot of people got scared, and I sometimes scared a lot of people off! So, I mean in retrospect, I'm super grateful for that opportunity. I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now if it wasn't for that. But, you know, it would- it came at a good time, it laid the groundwork, gave me a lot of ideas, and I was able to move forward with other things. So, then I started- I became part of the rotation at Atmosphere for a while, and then I filled in occasionally for my other drag sister, Alexis Bevels, she works at- she was starting at a drag gig at- she already had one at the Glenwood up in Roger's Park, and she was starting to take over at SoFo. And then some things ended, Atmosphere went- went the way of whatever- They ended that program for whatever reason they decided to. And then- and then Alexis had another show, and it just happened to work out. Like it's again, just, like, things just happen to keep falling in my lap.

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: I mean, I say, "Falling in my lap," but I also, like, for the Atmosphere's and SoFo gigs and Glenwood, when you're filling in, like, it's not like they- They knew I had a knowledge of doing this, so they knew they could rely on me, and- But then there were just opportunities that arose within SoFo where Alexis ended up getting a show every other week at a different bar, and she's like, "Hey, I can't do this a hun- every single week, would you want to share it? And then we'll go back and forth." And I'm like, "Yeah, sure!" So, it was like: it was a gay bar, I didn't have to do it every week, and, you know, it was like a little bit of the pressure was off, and yeah. I just- I think even there specifically, now that I'm at SoFo, I really see all of the possibilities and all the opportunities that I can have. Like, I am doing shit there that I'm just like- I never thought I'd do, like: just some of the- some of the crap that's coming out of my mouth, for one; some of the

things I'm asking people to do; some of the games I'm asking people to play; the reactions I'm getting from people. I'm just like, I've never felt happier doing Bingo than I have at SoFo.

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: It's like at this point, all the stars have aligned, and want- I say that now, and it's like, oh, the place will burn down tomorrow or something.

MDA: I hope not.

SB: Yeah, me too! That's money! On top of that, that's money for me. I don't do this to... MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: I mean I do it for, like, an artistic outlet, yeah. And I do it to, you know, let the inside- let Sofanda out. I want to make money too. That's not why, I'm not just doing this just for the children, out of the goodness of my heard. Fuck that!

MDA: So, you said you- you perform at SoFo currently,

SB: Yeah.

MDA: How would you describe that bar?

SB: It is... [lip smacks] kind of a gay neighborhood bar. It's like a gay Cheers. It really is. It's just like everybody knows your name, you know all the bartenders, you know what nights to come in, you know, just go and have a beer after work, or like... It's super chill. But, like, they also- The staff there and the- the bartenders and the rest of the staff are all also really invested in it too, so like, I know they're invested in the programming too and want it to succeed, and, like, the bartender who's there, Danny, you know, is always like- we're always bouncing ideas off each other, you know. He came up with the idea to- He came up with the idea- He's like- You know, we inherited this from- This was a Bingo night they had at Crew, and then Crew closed, and so SoFo was like, "Well, we'll take it," since they, you know, share owners and stuff, they're like, "well, we'll just do Bingo night at SoFo," 'cause they didn't start bingo there until, what is it, September/October? Something like that. And then, yeah. And then it was- So it was the same name, it was "Bada-Bingo with Toyota Corona," and then we came here, and it was "Bada-Bingo with Alexis Bevels," and then it was "Bada-Bingo with Alexis Bevels and Sofanda Booz." And- Yeah- Sorry, I lost my train of thought. So, but, I would say, like, everyone there is just really open and collaborative, and they let me run with these ideas and just go up there and be a fool all the time. And, you know, they support it and I really appreciate it. Like it's different to be in a- It's different- It's the same thing as my day job, it's different going into a place you love to work...

MDA: Mhmm.

SB: ... versus going in to a place where they're just paying you and you're just going. Like, you know, it's not that I didn't love doing it at the straight bar. It's not that I didn't love doing it at Atmosphere. It's just that this place, like I said, all the stars have aligned and the people there are so great, and the customers are so great that it's just like- I think that familiarity, like that Cheers-type vibe, is kind of what lends itself to that. Like, I know most of the people who come in every week, and, you know, they know me too—they know what to expect...

MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: Just sheer buffoonery. And, yeah, it's good. Like, I feel like I can really let go and let loose 'cause it's so chill and so laid back and 'cause everyone's so awesome, so.

[00:31:02]

MDA: That- that's excellent!

SB: Yeah.

MDA: Can- can you tell me about- a bit about- Can you tell me a bit about the people that come in to play bingo with you?

SB: Yeah. [Chuckles]. I mean, I do- I've gotten the regulars, I've gotten the people who followed me from Atmosphere so, I've- And then the occasional just random group of people who are

like, “Bingo? What? I had no idea!” But, I will say this about them, like- I mean Bingo’s not for everybody, but people get really passionate about playing Bingo.

MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: Like you’ve played before, you know that, like, when you’re one square away and then somebody else calls it, you are *so mad!*

MDA: Oh yeah!

SB: Or when I call a ball that, you know, that you don’t- it’s like you need B1 and I call B2, you’re like, “*Damn it!*” Like, people get so- I on multiple occasions have to explain to people, I’m like “You know that I have no control over this, right? Like, you know this is a game of chance. I am just merely the arbiter [laughs]...”

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: “... of said bingo balls. The purveyor of these numbers and letters, like.” So, I mean, the people who come in, you know, I always try to be my semi-charming self, you know, when they come in, and I can gauge pretty well the people that want to be there/the people who don’t. But I mean, like, the type of people that come in, I feel like you always- I never met somebody at any of my gigs who decided to play bingo that didn’t have a good time. They’re not like- Even if they didn’t win, they’re not like, “Ah crap! That was, you know- That was a terrible evening.”

Because, like, the other thing about it is they- if they’re sitting down to play, they want to be engaged, and they want to be active, and they want to be doing something, and I think that- I don’t know, it just takes a certain type of person to even want to sit down and take a chance and do it. And then my experience with the specific people who come in to SoFo and play Bingo is just that they’re all a crazy bunch of bastards. They are all- I’ve never, like, it’s going back to what I said before, like, I’ve never met a nicer bunch of people...

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: ...as customers. Everyone’s so kind and everyone’s so nice. And, one of the owners—there was an incident with something when I first started, with a customer—and they said to me, you know, “We really want this to be a safe haven for everybody, everyone feel welcome, and, you know, nobody’s turned away or nobody feels uncomfortable.” And I took that to heart. So, I’m like, “I’ve always wanted that, that’s what I want in my life, that’s what I wanted when I would go out, you know, to a bar or something.” And so, I feel like everyone there- It’s like we have our own, like, little Tuesday-night community, you know, so it’s fun. Whether they come every week, or whether they come once a month or once every six months, I just appreciate that they all buy in to what I’m selling.

MDA: That’s cool.

SB: Yeah.

MDA: What do you think keeps- keeps people coming back to Bingo, or what do you think draws people in to bingo?

SB: My sparkling personality and undying beauty! [Laughs]. I really don’t know, I’m like- People, I mean, like I said, people just want a mindless escape sometimes. It’s fun for them and they get to, you know, they get to be active and do something with their friends and also drink. I think that’s part of it; part of it is also because, like, people just like SoFo, you know. They’re, like, - I think there’s a loyalty to that place...

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: ... that I’ve seen from the customers that I haven’t really seen from any other place that I’ve done this at. You know, people are very, very loyal to that bar and what I’m trying to do is forge connections with the people who come in. ‘Cause, I mean you’ve seen it too, like I don’t- I’m not just this, like, person up here, and then I put on the mic and whatever. I love talking to people and like engaging with people, and I think that’s part of it, like when people feel like they’re part of the fun, when people feel like they’re appreciated and when people feel like, you know, “I didn’t just come here, you like that I’m here, and you want me to be here,” and, you know, that when we interact, I think it also is something that I do with people that encourages them to come

back—at least I hope it does because I don't want anyone leaving ever having a bad time, I don't want anyone leaving ever feeling uncomfortable because that's just what I want, you know, for me.

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: That's what I would want from the other side of it, so, I try and engage as many people as possible, and I hope that why they come back is because of me and because of Alexis, you know, because- I know there are just some people who just come in for Bingo now, so I'm like, "Cool! Guess I'm doing my job!" So, I hope so anyway [laughs].

MDA: That's cool! So, I'd like to talk about your...

SB: Mmhmm...

MDA: Like what you do hosting Bingo.

SB: Yeah!

MDA: What are some of your ritualizing practices surrounding the game of Bingo?

SB: Mmmmm [pensive]. I without fail will always continue to make an orgasm noise whenever O69 comes up. You can't take that away from me, you can't tell me to stop, you can't tell me not to do it. I mean, like, I'm- At my core, when it comes to Bingo, I'm dick jokes and dad jokes, and sometimes I get some dad dick jokes in there, like in between. But like, I mean, I'm not- All I want to do- Like, I've got my list of, like, games and my list of, like, special things we can do, like a "Wild Bingo" or like a "Speed Round" things like that. So, like, I mean, I've actually done- And I have my little boards that I'm like, "Okay, this is what we're going to do this time, and this time, and this time!" Like, I take it *seriously*. Like, I want to be prepared and make sure I'm- I have everything- all my ducks in a row to make sure that everyone else knows what they're doing, knows how to play, has a fair chance of winning. And that just might be me being like, I don't know, like, coming from an acting background like, "You have to know your lines, you have to know you're blocking, you have to know your choreography." Like, I don't, like, choreograph anything I say or do, it literally is all off the cuff, other than the, like, the stupid rhymes with like, you know, "G66"- no wait, O, that O66, "O66, sucking all the dicks!" Like, things like that. I mean, like, I've got my little rhymes and things engrained in my head, and I think it kind of goes along with just the preparedness of wanting to make sure people have a good time and people are entertained. In terms of, like, rituals or anything, I'm just like- There's a lot of times where I'm just like, "Okay, let's put on this makeup and this wig and this dress and let's hope for the best, let's hope I don't break my ankle, let's hope I don't get too drunk." So, a lot of hoping is involved with it too. But, I mean I know I'm there to do a job, so, like, I've got my little arsenal of tools and I've got my know-how in my head of things that I can say and do. And I think just preparedness-wise, like the biggest thing is going back to when I get there: engaging people and talking to people, like, and making sure that people know that they're welcome and that I want them to play, and I want them to win, and I'm cheering for them, you know, 'cause I am! I've always wanted people doing that for me when I'm playing Bingo, and- You know, I want them to know- I want them to feel comfortable. So, I mean, If I'm uncomfortable, they're uncomfortable, and visa versa, so.

MDA: Mmhmm [agreement].

SB: I'm- Yeah, it's not really any magic answer, it's more a ethereal answer for you.

[00:40:42]

MDA: Oh no, it's great! So, you talked about your arsenal...

SB: Mmhmm [affirmative].

MDA: ... And I know part of that is that you have these cards...

SB: Yeah!

MDA: ... with different patterns on them, can you talk about some of the patterns that you- that you play during Bingo...

SB: Yeah.

MDA: ... and how you introduce them?

SB: Oooh boy! This is the R-rated part of the interview [laughs]. Not that my swearing hasn't been. Sorry, I have a potty mouth.

MDA: It's fine. It's fine.

SB: You know that from seeing me at Bingo. So- Again, when I started my career, it was "Dirty Bingo with the Bearded Lady" and His Bevy of Beauties."

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: And I looked up, and I just like- I researched all of these different Bingo boards. And I'm like, "Well what else can I do? What else can I draw? How can I do this?" And I'm like, "Okay, easy enough, I can draw a dick, so let's draw a dick on here, and... Okay, it's a big hard-" And I don't know why I drew it in purple, but I did, and I've had it in purple for years. So, I have this "Big Purple Dick" and I'm like "Look at my big, hard, purple dick!" Oh god am I'm screaming that out? I'm so sorry.

MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: [Laughs]. So, it's like, "Look at my big hard purple dick!" Or, like, there's to ways to- Like, sometimes I'll be feeling frisky and it's like, "Okay, I'll give you more than one way to win." And it's like, "Hold it up, it's a hard dick; hold it down, it's a soft dick." So- And part of the reason I do that is one: to diversity people's chances of winning, for one; and two, also, I do something where people don't just yell "Bingo!" when I- when I- when they win with me—unless I'm drunk and forget, which does happen—they usually- with every special board, there's something special to yell out. So even with something like that: like the dick being hard, the dick being soft, it's like, you have to yell something different. Like when the dick is hard, you have to yell out, "I've got a hard on!" Or if it's soft and- I think the one I always do—I always think I'm going to come up with something new but I don't, one day I will I promise—but when it's a soft dick, I always yell out "Flaccid! Flaccid!" from *Death Becomes Her*...

MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: ... which is one of my favorite movies of all times.

MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: So even with stuff like that, with the things that they call out, I kind of refer to my own knowledge of pop culture, and movies, and television, and drag, and, you know, current events, things like that, to kind of keep people on their toes and make sure that they're engaged. I feel like the biggest thing about it is I like doing all these different boards and switching it up all the time...

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: and not having the same program because: one, I kind of like the mentality of people coming in and you don't know what you're going to get [voice cracks]—Ooh, puberty!—you don't know what you're going to get; and then two, also having to listen and make sure they're paying attention and like, you know, and like other- other boards- other good ones I've done... "Five whores in a corner" is a fun one, so it's just like a corner and then, like, the two on either side, and I usually am able to pick out- Usually pick out the staff, they're two whores, and then myself, I'm another whore, and then if I know somebody in the bar, they're the fourth whore, and then you're competing for that to be the fourth whore- or the fifth whore. So, you know, it's just silly stuff like, but, you know- I'm not going to lie, I have—and the same thing with my drag—I have gone to other queen's Bingo, and I have playfully repurposed some of their own boards or done my own spin on it, but I mean, like, you know, there's only so many things you can do with a Bingo board or so many abstracts design you can draw [laughing] without it being ridiculous.

MDA: [Laughing].

SB: Like, okay and now you're going to draw an abstract flower, or like a- You know, it's hard, but, like, I- With the boards I do, I try to just keep it light and funny, and I think the whole Dirty Bingo aspect has kept people- keeps- I think, you know, people like a good dirty joke, so if

you're starting from there, I'm just like- Basically I'm like, "Okay we're going to set the bar down here for the class level where we're going to be"

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: Like I said, it's dick jokes, pussy jokes, that's about it. So, I want people to know what they're getting into when they do it. 'Cause my old thing was called "Dirty Bingo!" but this is not called "Dirty Bingo!" anymore. Although we-

MDA: It's "See You Next Tuesday Bingo."

SB: I mean, now it's "See You Next Tuesday." Exactly, we rebranded it and now it's "See You Next Tuesday." So, I kind of- I was the one who pushed for that.

MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: [changes voice: higher] *MEENSO you know*. I felt it went along with the brand, but I mean, I did not do it without Alexis. Alexis was right there with me, and she was on board too, so. Yeah, so I think it also opened ourselves up to have more fun and do other things like lipsynchs, and-lipsynchs, and, like, a ring toss on a dildo, or...

MDA: Can you tell me a bit about these?

SB: Oh god!

MDA: 'Cause I thought you- Or is it you guys lipsynching?

SB: So, you know, again with Alexis and I coming in, SoFo wanted to kind of diversify the night, and, you know, they're like, "well we want to have it not just be Bingo, we want it to be something more than that, like." So, we came up with this concept of like, "See You Next Tuesday" because the other question- the other thing that came up was that people are always asking like, "Oh, well when's Bingo?"

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: "Well it's called "See You Next Tuesday" so, it's on Tuesday." So, I mean if you can't figure it out then you have bigger problems, bit- I mean, See You Next Tuesday officially started beginning of February, so it's kind of new. Alexis actually hasn't been here for any of it, so I've kind of been- I've had three weeks so far to do my own thing.

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: And like, there's, honestly, stuff that comes to me in the moment that I'm just like, "*Let's do this!*" because I've always said it, I thank god for those audiences because, like, I tell them to say stupid shit when I'm on a microphone, or I ask them to do stupid shit, and people do it! *It's awesome!*

MDA: Can you give me an example?

SB: Yeah. I mean, like, one thing I came up with this past week- So like I told you O69, favorite ball of all time, *absolute* favorite! So, then I'm just like, "Huh, so we always call this ball, we don't do anything with it." So, I'm like, "Why don't we do a contest?" I'm like, "Whoever wants a free shot, show me a dick pic that somebody sent you within the past week." And then, like, everyone just kind of looked at each other, and they're like, "Eh, I don't really want to do that?" And then one person stood up, and I'm like, "Nobody? C'mon!" I'm like, "It's a bar full of predominantly gay men! Somebody has a dick pic on their phone." So, you know one person came up, and then a second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh- And like eight or nine people came up. And, so I'm, like, standing there in this, like, 50s- 1950s style housewife dress with a bunch of men shoving their phones in my face with just dick pics.

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: Like, "What about this one?" "What about this one?" I was like, "Woah!"

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: "What have I just unleashed here?" But again, like- It's like- I think the initial reaction from people was shock, and they're like, "*What?*" 'Cause it's a Tuesday. I know that, like, there's other parties and stuff where they're like, they take dick pics, or they put them on TVs or whatever, but this is like, It's Bingo! It's like, people aren't expecting that. So, people are like,

“Wait! You want us to what?” And so, once that set it- And again, I think it’s because of the environment I was- I’ve created, people are comfortable enough to come up and do that.

MDA: Mmhmm [agreeing].

SB: Plus, people like alcohol, and they want a free shot, so that helps too!

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: So, you know, things like that. And, like, I’m just trying to also just change it up, and make sure people are- I’ve been to Bingo where people are just like, they’re like, “B1, 1 under the B.” You know, and like call that out just like clockwork every single time, and I don’t like that. It’s fine, but it’s not- I want to make sure that—whether you’re drunk or sober, gay/straight/whatever—I want to make sure you’re paying attention and that you are fully engage in *everything* I’m doing, so that’s why I’m always trying to throw little curve balls and stuff like that. And plus, it gives people an opportunity to win more and do more, and when people win, and you know- Even if one person wins and everyone else loses, everyone still feels, like, good, or like, “Oh that could have been me!” or “I can win too!” things like that. So, it also kind of bumps up morale in this, like, little Tuesday night Bingo community that we have for the evening.

[00:50:12]

MDA: That’s awe- Yeah, that’s awesome. You’re kind of touching on this, when you’re hosting do you do anything to get people to explore their gender and/or sexual identities?

SB: I mean- You know, there’s one thing I do that I do- I always try and promote a level of openness and, kind of, where I’m at with Bingo now is just, like, anything goes.

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: As long as people are, you know, safe and having fun, anything goes. I just want people to have a good time, so like- One of the things I do that has yielded a myriad of results is “Storytime,” which is just one of my *favorite* things to do. And there have been times where Storytime- Let me tell you what Storytime is first. So, Storytime is: I have a black board, I get a volunteer from the audience who’s willing to tell a story, I have now started telling people, “You have to limit this story to about 60 or 90 seconds. Tell me a story about something like- Like a sexy story or an embarrassing story or something stupid that happened to you today,” just anything, you know. And so, I like when people tell- I always encourage people to tell like, “Tell me, like, a sexy story, like about your first time, or about like an awkward experience, and about- or you know like the time your mom walked in on you,” I don’t- you know, whatever. And the reason I had started doing that at “Dirty Bingo” back in the day at a straight bar—and I got some good stories from straight bars, let me tell you—was just so people would feel- so I wasn’t the only one who was doing it. Like it’s one thing to get up there on a microphone and be, you know, making all these jokes about sex or talking about sex. And it’s because I’m comfortable with sex, but I also want everyone else to be comfortable too. So, it’s, like, it’s a little opportunity for somebody to share a little bit about themselves and to tell a story and, you know, make people laugh, or, like, get a reaction, or, like- You know there’s no shame in anything that anybody has ever told. I would say 99 percent of the time, whatever story they’ve shared, I mean, usually yields some laughter from the crowd or some kind of big reaction, but, like, I kind of just want to also normalize sex. Like there’s nothing wrong with it. It’s just like, we all have sex, we all have our own identities that we need to not be ashamed of and just be proud of, and it’s part of my little opportunity to kind of like give somebody else the spotlight for a minute to do the same thing where- that I’m doing in drag. It’s like let your best self come out, let that little, like open up a little bit, like share something about yourself. And the same thing- Like I’ve started implementing the “Wheel of Divas” and occasionally—not always, it’s not a guarantee—occasionally, if we have a tie, we’ll spin the wheel and then do a “Lipsync for Your Life.” I will say, some of the people who get up there and lipsync are like the biggest, like, butchest guys... that all of a sudden will pull out these dance moves and put out like...

MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: ... this like word-for-word lipsync, and I'm like, "Where did you come from? And, please don't take my job!"

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: So- But then, like, it's again- That's meant to do the same thing. I think drag has broken down so many barriers in terms of gender expression and gender identity; and, like I said, I don't think of drag in terms of gender anymore, I think of it in terms of expression. So, like, if going up there and lipsynching also gives you an opportunity to be a different person for 90 seconds or explore something within yourself that's, you know, that wants to come out or that isn't around every single day or is around only when you're in your bedroom, then fine, like, great! I like when people take chances and just, like, release that part of themselves and just have fun. Yeah!

MDA: Cool! So, when you're hosting Bingo...

SB: Mmhmm...

MDA: ... what do you do when two or more people call Bingo at the same time, or call the win thing that you...

SB: *Oh god!* I panic, first of all. Like I said, I have this arsenal of tricks inside my head, and I don't always know what I was- what I'm going to do. I used to be overtly prepared. I used to have themes every week at my- at the old place- at the straight bar, and I used to be like, "Okay, based on my costume, based on this, this week's them is Disney. So, then we're going to have- You know, I'm dressed like a Disney princess and we're going to have Disney themed trivia questions."

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: And I used to have people, like, grab one of my- each grab a boob, or if there was more people, then they'd grab a boob or a butt or whatever, or I'd do different rounds and ask them trivia questions to try and do tie-breakers. But again, I've really been challenging myself to not just do that. I've been doing, you know, tie breakers in terms of- One on Fat Tuesday, I had a big, giant dildo from my personal collection that is just far too big to be inserted inside anybody, so I decided to use it as a prop instead. It's *huge!* It's really big. Like, it's like, I don't know, I would say- I don't know how big, like Coke can big.

MDA: [Snickers].

SB: Like Coke can big, and like two Coke cans long. And I'm like, "Nobody needs this in their butt." So, I use it as a prop. So, on Fat Tuesday, like, we had beads, so then, like, when we had a tie, people did a ring toss on it and, you know, I gave it a shot, and I tried something new, and I tried something different; *and it worked!* So, you know, I'll do trivia, I'll do ring toss, I'll do Lipsync For Your Life, I'll do- sometimes I'll just- I mean if I've got 10 people, I've got to arbitrarily cut it down, and so, like, literally, when I said I panic, I'm not kidding, I honestly panic because my brain- I'm, like, up there...

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: ... smiling with a microphone—and, like, my brain is working a million miles a minute to come up with, "What am I going to do? I have to pivot and adjust *right now!*" But like I said, I think I've built up a safety net of things, like props, and pop culture knowledge, and trivia, and, you know, preparation with the bar that I always feel confident that I can come up with something on the fly.

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: So, I'm not pulling it out of nowhere, but I'm winging it, if that makes sense. Like, it's a fine line.

MDA: Yeah, that makes sense. What do you think makes drag bingo unique from other types of drag performances?

SB: I said this to somebody recently. I'm not- As a drag performer, I don't really feel- I'm not really engaged in the world of- That's really the only world I'm in right now- Like I'm not

performing, I'm not acting. I do do drag performances, like pop-up performance as part of SoFo now, like in the interim, in the break, but I don't- I'm not out there, you know, at the *Drag Race* at Roscoe's trying to compete. I'm not at Berlin, you know, part of their, like midnight shows. Like, I enjoy going there to see that. But I've always said I have a tremendous respect for drag queens, and I think everybody brings something different to the table. And I went, and I saw a pageant, like a local pageant, for Hamburger Mary's—it was their first time doing it, so they're just starting this annual pageant and the girls are great! Amazing performers! And the thing that threw me was the interview portion, and there were some people that were *amazing performers*, and when you put them on microphone, they didn't know how to- they could barely formulate a sentence. I think it was the nerves, clearly, but like, also they lead me to really value myself and what I do and have a new appreciation for myself; 'cause I'm like... I look at those girls, you know, doing the splits and, you know, beating their mug for days, and doing some of the shit they do; and I'm like, "I could never do that." But then I look at myself I'm like, "I know for a fact that there are some of those girls who cannot do what I do."

MDA: Mmhmm.

[01:00:29]

SB: I don't think I'll ever have the same respect level as a lot of those queens. I don't really- Like as far as my drag queen friends go, it's a very small circle, and they all are mostly performers. And I know a lot of drag queens in the community, but I don't think I'm viewed as a- I don't think I'm viewed on the same level as them, but I don't think they've also given me a chance. Like, I know a lot of these queens that, you know, go to the- go to other gigs, other gigs, other gigs, support each other, go to whatever. Drag queens don't come to my Bingo—except for my friends, like my friends that are drag queens, the few. So, like I said- There's a level of- I just read an interview with Aja after she got kicked off *Drag Race* last night, talking about how- You know, all drag queens are- there's a level of insecurity, and like I said earlier, like, need validation. And I have that, definitely, but part of me, over the past few months and where I've come in my journey—especially with Bingo—realize that I don't really care anymore. Like, there's going to be people who like what I do, and there's going to be people who look at me as a booger and think that I'm not a drag queen, I'm just, you know, whatever. I don't really care. Like, everyone's entitled to their opinion, and everyone has social media and feels the need to express themselves all over the place. I am confident in what I do. *I love what I do!* I love being up there. I love making people happy and making people laugh, and like I said, like, I don't know how I got here—how it, like, happened—but I wouldn't trade it for anything. I don't want to be one of those girls, I want to be a hostess and- like, I love hosting and I love talking to people and, like, hearing what they have to say, and that. So, I'm okay with- I'm okay with the differences, but I don't know how many people in the drag community really celebrate the differences. I feel like especially a lot of young queens, maybe, or people who are very stuck on what it is they do still think that what I do isn't as valid as what they do. And I'm like... I mean I think it's a shame. It's disappointing sometimes, but I think about it this way, I'm just like, when I- I try to keep an open mind, I try to be not that discouraged by it, but the times I do get discouraged by it I'm like, "Well, do you have a regular gig? Do you get paid on the regular to do drag? Or are you going out and getting, like, fifty bucks for a show, you know, whatever?" I'm like, "Somebody wants me to be there, and somebody's paying me to be there, and somebody recognizes my talents and recognizes me as a valid performer and is encouraging me and they can see it because of the reaction of the people who come there."

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: So, I mean, if I don't get validation from other drag queens, fine. I could really give a shit. The only validation I really want is from the people in the bar that night. *That's really all I want.* And that's honestly like, I get so stupid gushy-mushy on the microphone sometimes, and I'm just like- I think I did a couple weeks ago, I almost started crying like, [whining voice] "You guys

mean so much to me!” And it really does. I mean I work a day job that’s not easy, and my favorite part of the week- Well let me clarify: my favorite part of the week is being *there*, doing *that*, making people laugh. So, it goes like this, in order of importance, let’s say, on a Tuesday: being in drag; hosting; making people laugh; drinking; having a good time; actually, day job; waking up; process of getting in drag—bottom of the list.

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: Bottom of the fucking list! *I hate getting in drag! I hate it! It’s the worst!* It’s not fun. Drag is not comfortable. Drag is not easy. And that’s the other thing that gets me. I’m on a diatribe for a second. The other thing that gets me is that drag is not easy, and why somebody else can’t recognize that just because I’m not doing the same thing you do does not mean I am not putting in a shit-ton of effort to do what I do. So, like I said, we’ll agree to disagree and move on with our lives. Sometimes it makes me mad, and sometimes I’m like “Meh.”

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: “Don’t really care. Have another drink.” [Laughs].

MDA: [Laughs]. So, knowing that drag isn’t easy...

SB: Yeah.

MDA: ... and having the experience to make that call, why host Bingo in drag?

SB: Like I said... I went to school to be an actor—that’s what I went to college for, that’s what I got my *Bachelors of Arts* in.

MDA: Nice!

SB: That’s why I moved to Chicago. I moved to Chicago to be an actor and perform because it was truly the only thing that made me happy for a long time. And it evolved, it changed, and I’m a very social person, and I love hearing people’s stories, making new friends, like, learning from other people’s experiences, and I also still love having a creative outlet. I’m very luck—I don’t know how this happened, but I started dating somebody six months ago, and I feel like on our first date, I told him, “By the way, you should know...” [voice trails].

MDA: [Chuckles].

SB: I always lead with that on a first- I always led with that on a first date ‘cause some people aren’t into it, some people are like, “Ummm okay. Can’t handle it, I’m out.” So, he was cool with it ‘cause he’s a dancer, and a performer, and an actor, so he got it. It took him a while to come see me, but he got it. So, he now, because of my interest and my- and what I do, it sparked something inside him, and he’s now become somebody who’s also exploring the world of drag and also exploring what he wants to do, and has also become a creative collaborator with me, like in terms of costuming, and wigs and, you know, everything in between. So, the other part of it is that now I’m- ‘Cause there were times I was doing Bingo and over the past couple of years, I felt very much an island, very much alone, but now I think the other part of it’s kind of lit a fire under me, was like I have somebody to bounce this stuff off of, somebody to be like, “Yes, do that; don’t do that; yes, that looks good; no, that doesn’t look good.”

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: And also, a cheerleader, somebody to, like, support me and tell me I’m great, and say, “Go out there and go get them!” So, I mean I’ve ventured away, I’ve ebbed and flowed away from the world of drag many times over the past few years, sometimes not even doing it for six/eight months at a time in between gigs. But he reminds- He helped me remember why it was I started doing it and why I like hosting was because it fills a void in me, that passion that I had for acting and that passion I had for performing and for making people laugh, it’s back and it’s this whole new world that I, like, never dreamed I would ever be a part of, and I feel lucky to be a part of it. Really lucky because, like I said, there’s people out there who, you know bust their butts and don’t get daily gigs, or, you know, things like that. So, I mean. It just- It makes me happy and I can’t- This is really nothing else to say about it, it just makes me happy. Yeah.

MDA: That’s great!

SB: Yeah.

[01:10:43]

MDA: So what advice would you give to somebody who's looking into getting into drag bingo...

SB: [Laughs].

MDA: ... or wants to host drag bingo?

SB: [continues laughing]. First of all, don't- I would recommend stay away from *my gig* and stay away from *my shit*. So, if you want to do Bingo... Okay, let me do this in the non-catty way that if it's like somebody actually wants to do it. Basically- The thing about it is like, first of all I think you need to just like put yourself out there and just take a chance. If it's something you really want to do, like, and you have a bar that doesn't have a Bingo, or you see an opportunity, you have to take the opportunity. Like, there's been times where I've, you know, that first- My very first thing, somebody said, "Oh well they want to do Bingo," and I said, "I'm going to make this mine, and I'm going to turn this into something." Like there's plenty of- There's so many bars in Chicago and so many- I mean you have to obviously do your research and know the programming of said establishment to see that it's even a viable option, but like, there'll be opportunities that fall in your lap. There'll be opportunities that, like SoFo, somebody moved away, and you're right place right time. But the other thing about it is, if you want an opportunity, go out and make an opportunity. And the other thing about it is, if you really want to host drag bingo, go see as much drag bingo as humanly possible. You're not going to learn- it's like anything else, you're not going to learn unless you immerse yourself in it. I'm not kidding, like I have been to- I used to go to- Oh I forget her name- the- She used to host at Atmosphere before Christina Rose and I did, and then she went to a bar called Shakers, and then that gig ended. Terry Yaki would do it at the old Halsteds and then at Hydrate. Oh god, I'm blanking on her name. My friend Debbie Fox would do it at Spin when she was filling in for—*OH!* I'm going to hate myself for not knowing her name, I'm just blanking on her name, she's a sweet, sweet girl, sweet as pie, I'm just blanking on her name—she used to host it. And like there's like so many Drag Queen Bingos that it's like, "*Go see it!*" Like go see what they're doing and then decide what you want to do.

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: If you want to do it what there is that they're doing- I mean, yes, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but my advice is make it your own. I, like I said, I don't see- I know some people do some Dirty Bingo and some stuff like that, but I don't see people do it the way I do it, or at least I haven't in a while. And I think part of the reason why is because I want to go to other people's bingos now, but now I got, at least in the month of February, I've got two gigs a week, so I haven't had a chance to. But, the other thing I need to do personally—it sounds silly to say, but—is like go out there and see who else is doing bingo and do my research, find out what's changed, see if there's any new ideas that I can appropriate or switch into my own. Like maybe they're doing something fun, maybe they're doing something cool. And I don't feel like drag queen bingo is a -any one person is doing any kind of *revolutionary* drag queen bingo.

MDA: Mmhmm.

SB: It all depends on the establishment. It all depends on the prizes. It all depends on the clientele. It depends on the queen doing it, being engaging and, like, funny. But, like, just do as much research as possible. Put yourself out there. Why not? What do you got to lose?

MDA: Great! So, those are all the questions that I have...

SB: Okay.

MDA: Is there anything else that you'd like to add that I haven't covered? Any insight...

SB: I- Like I said, I realized over the past few months, especially with the gig at SoFo, how much Bingo has actually become a big part of my life, and how much it means to me. I love watching how people get excited over it, and like, so angry, *so angry when they lose*, *so happy* when they win. And like I said, there's something about it that's just like this basic shared human experience like, "we're all in this together!" And it's just a- It's just come to symbolize for me so much more than just, like, being in drag, it's also come to be just a part of who I am at this point.

You know, people at work and people at my job ask me about it all the time, and know that that's part of my life like, "Oh, you have bingo tonight? Oh okay!" So, it's just, I don't know, it's been a good outlet for me, and it's been a good opportunity for me to explore who I am as a drag queen, who I am as a hostess, as a- I guess a comedian. And I'm just like, because it has- because just that time on the mic has given me this path of self-discovery, it means so much more to me than just calling out numbers on a ball. It's something that actually like is part of my history, and when I decide whatever day to stop doing drag or stop hosting bingo or *the place burns down* [laughs], it'll be sad, but I will never- I will never be too sad knowing that it has given me so much. And that's that!

MDA: [Laughs].

SB: [Laughs].

MDA: That's great!

SB: Yeah!

MDA: Thank you very much for your time!

SB: Thank you, this was very enlightening to myself.

MDA: All right, great!

SB: Awesome.

[01:18:14]