

RISING STAR

# “I’m an internet sensation, honey”

ACTOR, PRODUCER AND JUDGE ON *RUPAUL’S DRAG RACE*, **TS MADISON** CAN MOVE CULTURE WITH HER VIRAL VIDEOS – EVEN BEYONCÉ’S A FAN

“**SIX SECONDS CHANGED** the entire trajectory of my life,” TS Madison tells me. She’s talking about her viral Vine video “New Weave 22 Inches” – a brief but emphatic ode to her new hairstyle that’s now internet canon. “Everyone found it to be such a comedic relief. And people fell in love with six seconds of me being trashy and fun.” It’s how *World of Wonder* – which produces *RuPaul’s Drag Race* – found her, and set her on a path to fame by giving her her own YouTube show and offering her a seat on the show’s esteemed judging panel. The rest, Madison says, “is history.”

Now Madison’s star is on the rise again after a string of scene-stealing roles in films, including 2020 stripper epic *Zola* and queer romcom *Bros* (2022). And last summer she got the ultimate endorsement from Queen Bey when her voice was sampled in the singer’s Black pride anthem, *Cozy*. She talks to us about her plans to star in the first Black trans romcom, her favourite *Drag Race* moments and why Beyoncé is taking notes from her.

**You’re filming something in LA at the moment, aren’t you?**

Yes, honey, I can’t say very much, but let me just say: may the best queen win!

**Got you. Where do you live now?**

I live in Atlanta, but I’m born and raised in Miami. I started out as a Florida orange now I’m a Georgia peach. I moved to Atlanta because when I was younger I saw a bigger horizon for myself and in Miami I was surrounded by people who were stagnant. ▶





**“I’M OK WITH BLURTING OUT THAT I’M TRANS BECAUSE IT’S IMPORTANT TO ME, I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT. I’M CONFIDENT AND SOLID IN MYSELF”**

**I loved *Zola*. What do you think the movie did for Florida representation?**

It is a crazy place, it’s gotten even crazier with Ron DeSantis at the helm. My mom lives part-time with me and she lives part-time in Florida. I’m trying to encourage her to let Florida go, girl. Hell, the way I keep going back and forth to LA, I may need to let Georgia go.

**Would you move to LA?**

You know what, mama, I live [in Atlanta] because it’s home now, but I’m always in sunny California. I’m going to be completely honest with you, I’m a bit of a foodie. Listen, everybody out here wants to live this Hollywood life, everyone out here wants to be 80 pounds. I’m like, I’m a Southern girl, I’ve got lots of meat on my bones. I need to be able to eat. Not to say LA doesn’t have good food. I like Joy and there’s a place called Mardi Gras Tuesday that I go to when I’m here.

**You’re very open about your transition. Why is it important for you to talk about it candidly?**

I don’t want people to think that all trans people are trying to deceive and not be open about what we were born. I’m OK with blurring

From above:  
TS Madison in  
*Bros* and with  
the *Drag Race*  
TV team



out that I’m trans because it’s important to me, I want you to know that. I don’t want you to be confused. I’m trans, honey, I don’t need to fool you because I’m confident and solid in myself.

**In *Bros* you play a version of yourself who is on the board of a museum and it often gets contentious. Have you been in spaces like that?**

I have been in spaces like that, but I haven’t been in spaces where it’s been as diverse. Because even though we are LGBTQ+ – race, experience, age, there are so many variables that separate us. Everybody in that room in the movie was a different age, had different experiences, were different genders and that speaks to how things should be. But in the real world, there’s Black Gay Pride and there’s regular Pride, and there’s Trans Pride – and it’s like, oh my God, are we ever going to be unified in anything? So I’ve never really occupied a space where we were all together in a room.

**Do you want to star in the first Black trans romcom?**

I would like to actually see it! Like, can we even see a romcom with a Black trans woman as the lead and it’s not ending in us being prostitutes or murdered? Can we get a story like that? Will I find a man who’s confident in his Blackness and who’s confident in his artistry as an actor to take on a role where he loves a Black transgender woman openly? I don’t know!

**I wanted to talk about the Beyoncé song, *Cozy*...**

Beyoncé is on tour right now and I’m looking at footage of it. I can’t even put into words the feeling that comes through me when I see her performing *Cozy*. My voice, my statement in that talking about [being] all shades of Black, [about] standing in your authenticity. When I first got the call, I didn’t know my voice was going to be used in that. They just said, “Hey, we want to sample your voice [in a song].” And I said, “OK, how much you got?” You know, I’m a working girl, how much you got, honey? When I read the fine print of the email at the bottom I was like, oh my God, it’s Beyoncé!

**How do you think she found you?**

Listen, Beyoncé has been watching me forever. I’m an internet sensation, honey. Like there’s a song she has where she says, “Hot sauce in my bag.” I literally be makin’ a video a long time ago where I was telling everybody, “Ya’ll trolls may be trying me but I keep my hot sauce in my bag.” I was like, she watches me! Nobody believed me. I’ll bet you they believe me now!

Watch Bros