

CLUB REVIEW

Borg Queen Assimilates Judges

Collective Gives Tamara Knight the
Miss Pittsburgh Crown

"Let's see what the new millennium has in store for the older woman," pronounced Dee Aynes during her opening presentation. For Dame Fefe Damiana

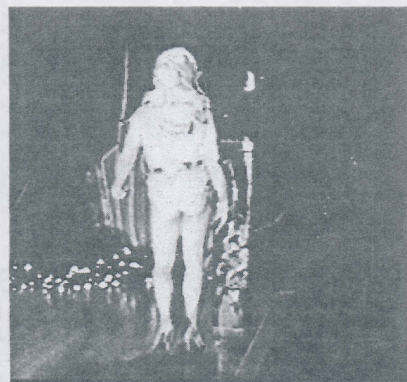


Tamara Knight

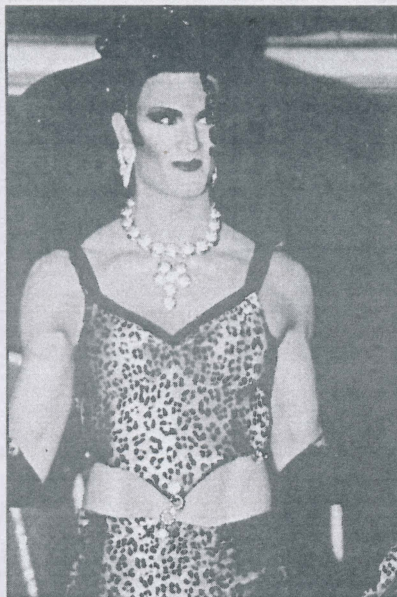
D'Opulence the question might have appropriately been, "What's in store for the biller woman?" And with good reason. The recent past has not been extraordinarily kind to Fefe. The present is not doing her many favors either. Before the results were announced at the end of the May 19th show at Pegasus, it appeared to us that Fefe had the Miss Pittsburgh 1999 title wrapped up. Instead, curious scoring by the judges added up to a 261-257 win for Tamara Knight.

A stunned Fefe couldn't quite hide her surprise when emcee extraordinaire, Bambi, announced her as the first runner-up. Quite frankly, we were stunned too.

Although there were three contestants in the show, it was really a competition between Tamara and Fefe. Dee Aynes' chances of winning the competition were similar to Liz Taylor's chances of becoming Miss Universe ... great-in 1959. Dee Aynes was, however, delightful and entertaining. She genuinely looked grateful when it was announced that she was second runner-up and she accepted the trophy with grace and dignity. Dignity, which really is just plain-old good manners, is a Josi art in the drag world, and we applaud Dee for bringing it to the stage.



Dee Aynes



Fefe Damiana D'Opulence

The contest was a match-up between Fefe and Tamara. According to the five judges, Tamara bested Fefe 67-63 during opening presentation. Dee was far behind with 48. Indeed, Tamara's opening was good ... better than Fefe's. Tamara came out as a Star Trek's Borg Queen and told the audience that she had already assimilated Fefe and Dee. A healthy hardy-har-har was had by one and all. Apparently, she was beginning to assimilate the judges too. Tamara then announced that she would assimilate the audience and be their leader in the collective known as Miss Pittsburgh ... Resistance is futile. We wanted this "first contact" to be our last. We considered leaving.

In her opening presentation remarks, Fefe quipped about last year's controversy regarding the eligibility of a person from West Virginia in competing for Miss Pittsburgh. "Last year Ibey said I was from out of state ... this year I am from out of this world". And she was! Fefe appeared in an elaborate costume that mimicked Star Wars' Queen Amidala. She spoke well and then exiled the stage, but not before components began to fall from her costume. Assimilation and disintegration, all in one show! Fefe's comments were energetic and clever, but also hurried. Tamara's delivery was superior.

Fefe was exciting and adventurous in her Opulence 2000 evening wear. She wore a leopard-print lycra dress with train, high empress collar, chain back and rhinestone clasp. The look was sexy, elegant and daring ... and a welcomed break from the ubiquitous bead bonanza frocks.

After Fefe, Aunt Betty lumbered onto the stage, er ... no that was Tamara Knight, subjecting the audience to yet another fashion yawn of an evening gown. It seems the Millennium bug struck early, and with all those cybernetic Borg implants it's easy to see how her fashion index might read 1899. She was apparently as unamused with her gown as it was unamusing, evidenced by the lack of any reference to what she was wearing in the contestant-provided narration that was read by Bambi during her stroll.

Earlier, Dee treated us to a mega-poufy gold lame

and cream chiffon gown that also was a switch from the expected beads. It was interesting, but it was kind of hard to believe that anyone would ever wear this dress except on stage.

Fefe's evening wear impressed the judges. But "the collective" unconsciously marked their scores and evening gown results were Fefe: 45, Tamara: 41, and Dee: 35.

Fefe lost the contest to Tamara during the question segment of the competition. All three contestants were given different questions crafted for each contestant. What keeps Dee going? Why didn't Fefe retire as she said she would? What has Tamara learned from both winning and losing? All three basically answered the same way: it was important to have fun..

The judges, however, saw a wide range in their answers and scored Tamara: 43, Dee: 40, and Fefe: 36. We asked one judge how Ibis result could happen and were told that there was a problem with Fefe's attitude.

Well, we didn't see it that way. After going to the Planet O instant replay, we concluded that the judges definitely made a bad call on the question segment. Fefe was honest, friendly and answered the question directly. Fefe again said that this would be "her" last year because of "his" plans to muscle-up (Such a chore, being handsome and svelte.) And we really liked her answer that she wanted to ride in the Pittsburgh Pride Parade on the back of a limo and wave (her) little heart out. There was nothing wrong with her attitude.

The talent competition is where Tamara's assimilation of the judges really began to have an effect. Fefe did an extraordinary performance of "The Ballroom Bliss." The costuming was creative and chic. Fefe integrated comedy and flair while following the difficult lyrics. She timed the shattering of a goblet perfectly. Nothing like a little rage. The lip synch did get away from her just as the number ended, but other than that, the performance was very good.

Tamara also went for a song with a high degree of difficulty. She performed "The Minute Waltz" with its excruciatingly complicated and quick lyrics that were even more difficult than Fefe's selection. And she was followed them precisely. Brava!

However, her corset must have been drawn too tightly, because she didn't do much else. Her 18th century French ballgown was perfect for the number, but looked as if she got it from Costume World. Tamara did manage a very quick costume change by simply ripping away the lower half of her dress. Then the lights went out, except for a black light that illuminated the fluorescing Tamara while the music cut to Madonna's "Vogue." Where did we see that one before?

The switch from "Waltz" to "Vogue" made no sense and seemed to be done just for the gimmicky effect of the black light, which looked nifty, and might have been slightly more intriguing if only Tamara had any ability to vogue.

The assimilated judges collectively scored the talent competition 113-110-81 in Fefe's favor over Tamara and Dee.

We fully expect that Tamara will be very successful at bringing her experience (Miss Pegasus 1997 and Miss Greensburg 1998) and professionalism to the title of Miss Pittsburgh. And she did much to deserve it. Congratulations, Tamara.

At the same time, we will always wonder what the eccentric, hyper-creative club kid, platform shoe-wearing, plastic-wigged, leopard-printed, super model drag queen, Fefe Damiana D'Opulence, would have done for the title of Miss Pittsburgh if given the opportunity to show Pittsburgh what you can do when you have a current subscription to Vogue.