



El Pachuco's Guide to Kinging

(a working document)

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Song selection

First things first – you want to come up with a song or an idea of what kind of guy you want to be up there. Song choice informs pretty much everything about your performance so choose wisely.

1. CONTENT - Songs that tell a story are good; songs that have a message can make an impact. Parodies go over well, and humor can always bring down the house. Choose a song you like! Chances are if you like your song, other people will like your song too. But liking the song doesn't necessarily mean it's a good song to perform.

2. LENGTH – I recommend keeping your song under 4 minutes. In fact, I rarely choose songs that are longer than 3:30. Why? Because long songs can get TIRING. Tiring to the audience, and tiring (physically) for you, especially if the song has a fast tempo. Speaking of tempo – slow songs are much harder to pull off. Choose something catchy: extra sappy slow love songs should generally be avoided. Tommy Salami adds – you can't go wrong with a sing-a-long.

3. STYLE – Songs that repeat a chorus over and over again can become annoyingly repetitive. For instance, I love STAND by REM, but after 1-2 minutes the repetition would leave me up there feeling like a broken record. Watch out for songs with long instrumental breaks. Unless you are an air guitar pro or have something interesting planned (like tap dancing or set choreography), long instrumental breaks tend to enhance the length of a song – leaving you less time to win over your audience with your fabulous lip synchability.

4. PRACTICE - So now you've got your song – not too long, not too slow and not too sappy. What next? Man, learn that song backwards and forwards. You should be singing it in your sleep. Listen to it to the point that you feel you're going to scream if you hear it one more time. Practice in front of the mirror as much as possible. Watch your mouth and pay attention to your facial expressions.

Practicing in front of friends can also get you prepared to get in front of the audience. I know that I was shaking like a leaf the first few times I performed. Friends can give you pointers, and can get you more comfortable to work the crowd.

WHAT TO WEAR

Audiences appreciate a well-thought out costume. Pay attention to detail. Make sure that your outfit suits your song. (Don't wear suede bell bottoms if you're singing Frank Sinatra, or a tuxedo when your doing Lenny Kravitz). Make sure you can move in what you are wearing (can you imagine if your pants split in the middle of your number?!? unless of course, its part of your act).

Apparel Tips:

1. Jeans - Boy jeans and girl jeans do NOT look alike. If you have hips (and most of us do) make sure you get some baggy jeans that hit low on the hips. Guys don't wear jeans that are high-waisted. Tapered jeans tend to exaggerate girl lines – so watch out!
2. On top - Unless you are going in girl drag (if you are this entire section does not really apply to you) you got to wrap those suckers down! Ace bandages, duct tape, whatever it takes.
WARNING: if you have your nipples pierced, be careful with the duct tape!
3. The bulge - There better be something down there, dude! Not only is this important because it will make you feel more like a guy, it creates realism. It's all about how authentic you can get. Choose what's comfortable for you (a tube sock, a soft pack, a dildo), and make sure its not going fall out when you're busy shaking your butt on the stage. This happened to me once, luckily at the end of the number, but there is nothing more embarrassing then having to walk off that stage with your dick sliding down your leg. Either tuck your package in your briefs or invest in a jock strap.
4. Suits, Slacks and Jackets - NO women's sports coats, NO shoulder pads (unless you are doing a WHAM! Cover), No white sport socks with black slacks (unless you are doing Michael Jackson). Learn your collar size and sleeve length. You don't want to be looking like you are wearing your dad's suit. Places to procure suits: Thrift Stores, second-hand vintage stores, and if you are endowed with a lot of cash – go get a suit at Men's Fashion Depot!
5. Shoes make the man! If you've got little feet – there's hope. Get inserts, wear two pairs of sock, heel grips, whatever it takes – but don't be wearing tiny shoes up there! You can tell a lot about a guy by his shoes. Make sure they match your outfit – that they enhance your style. Make sure you can move the way you need to – pay attention to tread, clunkiness, and size.

FINE TUNING

Now it's fine-tuning time. Unless you are doing the Cure, please refrain from putting on lipstick or eyeliner (unless you are using it to draw on a mustache). If you are blonde – don't give yourself black sideburns. Speaking of sideburns – Ben Nye stage make-up and a stipple sponge work well. You can get these at the Costume Shop on El Cajon Blvd. If you are ambitious and want to use hairpieces – watch out for synthetic hair – it can look extra shiny (and therefore pretty fake).

So now you look the part, right? You got your lip-synching down, you got your clothes, your manly looks... but how to walk the walk? My best advice is to watch guys. Observe how they carry themselves, how they sit, stand, walk, dance, hold their cigarettes, and interact with other people. Pretend you are making a Discovery Channel documentary on the male species. Not only can this be fascinating, thought-provoking, and humorous, it will give you a lot of material to work with. What kind of guy do you want to be? Watch the ones you like, and practice moving like them. The swagger of John Wayne, the suave saunter of Jimmy Stewart, the outrageous prancing of Mick Jagger – the possibilities are endless. Choose what works for you, and what works for your number and incorporate as much as you can. Oh yeah, and don't forget to give yourself a drag name! Remember - this is about expressing yourself and having some fun. These pointers are general suggestions, not drag law or anything. Do what you want, have a blast, and a gender-bending good time!

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