

RuPaul's Drag Race Season 7 Episode 9 Review



THROWNSHADE

TEXT MARK JACOBS

MAGIC MIRROR ON THE WALL, WHO'S THROWNSHADE BETTER THAN THEM ALL? MEET ISIS AND COCO, TWO DRAG QUEENS SERVING THE FIERCEST RUPAUL'S *DRAG RACE* RECAPS

Isis Mirage and Coco Ferocha are beautiful drag queen boyfriends who were both born on Janet Jackson's birthday and raised in the relative isolation of Gibraltar, the small British Overseas Territory on the southern coast of Spain. Three years ago, they began posting YouTube reviews of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Their videos, that can run longer than the *Drag Race* episodes they itemize, are opportunities—for the world to meditate on the other-level brilliance of Isis and Coco themselves.

The duo needs to be seen and heard as they trade their on-point superfan opinions, which are occasionally punctuated by a Pinky's nail popping off in slow motion. Isis, 23, is the self-described "future bitch," preferring darker goth effects, while Coco, 25, is inclined to a softer millennial bubblyness. Their stylized language is so compelling that *Drag Race* finalist Alaska Thunderfuck 5000 learned her signature "Hieeeeeee" from the duo while watching their first season of recaps. Underlying their critiques is profoundly evolved sensitivity and thoughtfulness informed by their experience growing up with only Internet access to like-minded creations.

Isis and Coco met online at VampireFreaks.com while in their teens. They later became friends in real life, and then universal partners. In 2010, they moved to Brighton, England, determined to connect to a community that was absent in more closed-minded Gibraltar. When that effort proved unsuccessful, they turned back to the Internet and began broadcasting *Drag Race* reviews out of necessity, seeking others who could relate to the show and the personal stories the duo would share in periodic life updates—like in 2013, when they were cornered into coming out as drag to their families after one of Coco's relatives happened upon their videos. They have since become the life-givers they seek, and an example of "the tenacity of spirit" that RuPaul discusses when explaining what *Drag Race* is about.

Last May, Isis and Coco returned to Gibraltar, to save money to relocate to the United States, a distant prospect that became real after they won a life-changing online contest to board an AlandChuck.travel "Drag Stars at Sea" cruise, which was their first time in America. They currently live apart with their respective families, shooting the new season of recaps in the home where Coco grew up.

That's where they are when we speak via Skype, with Isis and Coco both in half-face as they prepare to record their assessment of *Drag Race*'s annual "Snatch Game" episode. I am particularly excited to ask Isis about the Season 4, Episode 7 review, when Isis destroyed me with a description of an experimental new on-camera look. "This is my representation of what grannies will look like in the year three-thousand-and-out," Isis said, painted like Pris in *Blade Runner* with a Shocki bump. "So I'm giving you 80-year-old fish with a little future twist, bitch, because that's where I'm at." During our call, Isis explains that an old lady is already in the future because she's old. "So let's bring that old lady into the actual future. Because you can't go more future than an old lady in the future, I mean she's ready to die," Isis says, destroying me twice. I also learn that there is no need to ask for their favorite contestants from the current season. "When it comes to us," Coco says, "we're gonna give you the list, honey!"

Describe life in Gibraltar.

C: It's like three miles square and half of that is a big-ass mountain. We've got monkeys on it. It's messy. It's like a little bubble. Growing up here was really tough for both us.

I: You don't get much of an opportunity to leave because they make it almost impossible to move on in any kind of way. Anyone will tell you that it's a place that traps you. What was that movie? *The Village*? It's like *The Village*. Yes. Very that.

Who is in your crew?

I: No crew.

C: Nope. You're looking at it. Since we've been back we've been a little bit isolated.

I: Even the group of friends we originally had here were all regular-ass people—no gay people, no lesbians, no nothing. Just regular-ass girls who didn't really understand what it was like for us because living here was so easy for them. We never really experienced having people we could identify with.

But you two have the same birthday.

C: The same birthday. Which is ridiculous and like, 'Can I get a refund?' Like, what are we doing here? [laughs]

I: I have to wake up on my birthday and give someone else a present!

C: It's so us that it's ridiculous. My God.

You started drag after you moved to Brighton?

I: Yes and no, because we've always been feminine.

C: I can show you pictures from back in the day when we were here and we used to hit it and do it and we didn't even know what drag was, honey, but we were doing it.

I: There were times I would go out with plastic fucking hair on, the dreads I used to make, my Cyberlox, a little makeup. I used to get ready by the post box so my parents wouldn't see me. I'd walk to the club terrified and I'd stay at the club terrified. I'd do it every weekend and fuck you if you don't like it.

You were the only ones giving a look?

I: In Gibraltar? Yes. Completely. You would get appreciation from the people who got it, but you got a lot of shit from the people who didn't. And you had to make your way to that club on your own, too.

C: You had to walk these streets, honey.

How old were you then?

I: Oh my God, was I sixteen?

C: Yeah, like MySpace.

MySpace age?

C: MySpace was so important for us at the time, living such a sheltered-ass life. We didn't know nothing about nothing. I didn't know no gay, no drag, literally nothing. Only what you get on TV, which is obviously through some kind of filter.

I: And in Gibraltar no one's trying to get you to even know those people exist so you have to go find it. It was a lot of Internet, MySpace, Jeffree Star, Skylar Fairchild...

What was your first season of *Drag Race*?

I: Season 1, bitch! From the very first episode...

C: We were on it, honey.

I: Over in Gibraltar watching it, finding it on MySpace...

C: Jumping through goddamn hoops to see it, through VPN you-can't-watch-this-outside-of-the-USA-shit like all day. By the time we found *Drag Race* that was it. It was set in stone. We were in love with the show. That moment when BeBe [Zahara Benet] won Season 1? I freaked out! It was such a big deal to me. It was like, bitch, we've been doing this! All we got to do is zhuzh it up a little bit and we've got it!

Why did you start the recaps?

C: Being so isolated and not really having a lot going on, TV was a huge thing for us and reality TV was everything at the time. *Drag Race* started as just this really great show that we loved. But it wasn't popping over here. They aired it at like 10 p.m. on a Friday and there was basically nobody who watched it or liked it so we really couldn't talk about it with anyone.

I: Apart from people on Tumblr, which was where we were all day at that point.

Tumblr is a very special place.

C: Everything happens on Tumblr before it happens anywhere else. People are fucking on it there. But I wasn't going to make a post that long. At the same time, we had just moved. It was freedom for us. For the first time, we didn't have to worry about seeing the same people on the street every day and family being so close. We could finally do whatever the fuck we want so we started messing around with drag. We were like, we're doing drag, so let's do drag and do the review.

I: We didn't plan on doing it every week. It just got momentum. We'd been out in the clubs in England trying to meet the other drag queens and maybe someone who would help us out but that never happened, no matter how hard I thought I tried. So we figured let's do this. It's safe for us. I didn't have to worry about being out in the U.K., which I'm not used to because I'm not from there. It was a good way for us to get started in a safe environment—and reach people we wouldn't have reached even going outside. I'd been out doing the club thing for a long time and no one knew my name. The minute I went on YouTube, everything started popping off. We could directly respond to people. It was a lot better.

C: We found an avenue to share what we were doing when nothing else was working for us.

Isis, how do you describe your look?

I: I definitely am inspired by the whole cyber, goth kind of moment. When I was 16, I had a girlfriend who had this futuristic look but she was hella goth at the same time and I hadn't seen that. It was really dark but with really bright colors, kind of raver-y but gothic at the same time. She had a real eye for things. She definitely inspires a lot of the things that I do even now. I know it's very *Sex and the City* when Samantha meets that drag queen with her name that she used to date. It's very that. [laughs] But it's true. I still think about her sometimes when I do my eyeliner.

What inspired your name?

I: I came up with my name watching fucking *Aladdin*—not even the movie but the cartoon on Disney Channel. For so long I'd been thinking of using the name Isis, because it apparently means 'woman of the throne' and I wanted a powerful, strong name like that. So when I saw this villain called Mirage over there with her nails? I was like bitch, Mirage! Isis Mirage! So thank you to evil cat lady.

Coco, where did you get your name?

C: I was stuck, bitch. I can't decide on shit ever. A wall of fifty nail polishes is a fucking nightmare because I'm like, 'What do I do?' Like, okay, you line up the ten brightest ones and you choose, but it is very that. I've always loved fashion and there are so many great Cocos. This bitch [motions to Isis] was just like, do fucking Coco Ferocha, bitch! It makes sense because you ain't some skinny model chick. They're gonna see you and go, 'Ooh Coco Ferocha!' It was just funny for Coco Rocha to be such a glamorous model thing in my mind and for me to be the Ferocha. Put my own foot in it, you know?

How do you describe your look? You can go from a millennial moment to basically Cher in *Mermals*.

C: It's a plethora of stuff that's constantly changing. Like great women, iconic women of all times...

I: And un-iconic women...

C: That too.

I: Even horrible women.

C: Some old lady at the club she got on too much blush? Even her. Even she. You can find glamour and beauty in anything. For me it depends what my moment is. I'm half Spanish so sometimes I like to give a Spanish, black curly hair moment. I like to give a gaudy jewelry, *Mob Wives*, Renee Graziano moment. Sometimes I just want to be pretty and soft, and sometimes I want to be a wicked-fucking-cunty-evil-demon-bitch who's going to cast a spell on your whole family.

I: And sometimes you say, 'I'm going to do this and tonight it's going to be so good,' and then you do it and you're like, 'Nope, I'm something else!' [laughs]

C: But that's okay! Because you make it work, too!

I: I didn't plan on being here! But I'm here! And I'm gonna carry on!

Like in Episode 7 of this season's *Drag Race* when Tamar Braxton told Katya that she looked like Britney Spears at 45. Which was essentially what Katya intended.

C: That's perfection, yes.

I: I love someone who can want that. Because so many people think that's wrong.

C: They want to be so perfect and polished and glamorous.

It's the difference between the *Aladdin* movie and the *Aladdin* TV show.

I: Yes! That's what I want! That's what I want people to know! It's never quality with us! It's never gonna be! [laughs]

C: We've got to work on a miniscule-ass budget with a postal service that—literally—if the package isn't clearly labeled they will open your shit up and take a good look inside.

I: I had the lady in the post office open up a big pair of silicone tittles right there in a room full of people. Like, 'Are these yours?' Yes, mine! Yup! Thanks!

Where do you shop?

I: A lot of eBay because you can get something for hella cheap and dress it the fuck up. I mean, shit, I got a gown on eBay for a pound. A British pound. And the gown ain't that ugly neither! It's kind of cute!

Talk about coming out to your families as drag.

C: We got clocked, bitch! Some cousin, uncle, family member messaged my other cousin, who messaged my auntie, who messaged my mother who called me and was like, 'Who is Coco Rochelle?' [laughs] It was like, what do I even say? I had such a bad coming out experience. I had no choice but to share it and be real and be like look this is what I is.

I: The whole time doing YouTube up until the point that my parents found out that we were doing drag. I was scared every fucking time that it was just going take that one video for my parents to go on YouTube and search the wrong thing and there I'd be. And I had a lot to lose. When his mom called, I died inside. I was like, 'Shit. That's it. It's done. I'm fucked.' So that was nerve-wracking.

How did it go?

C: It's still kind of awkward. Like right now I'm sitting here in half-face and I have to work around my parents. But they're accepting and my mom is really willing to help us.

I: At the same time, it's not like it used to be because we have viewers and stuff. If something was to happen to me, I have a lot of people on my Facebook that I could tell and be like, 'This shit is going on in my life.' I don't feel hidden away anymore. Now I have a way to get out somehow. I don't have that same fear.

In Episode 6, when Jaldynn Dior Fierce talked about still being closeted, it was easy for someone in New York or Los Angeles to think his story felt almost redundant for a current season of *Drag Race*. But that life is still real for so many people.

C: Unfortunately.

I: It really speaks to the fact that as mainstream as *RuPaul's Drag Race* has become, it's still mainstream to fucking not love your kids unconditionally. And people need to know that. It was really cool they aired that.

In your recaps, you are critical but never mean.

I: We've had people in the past tell us that they wished that we were meaner. I don't feel like mean gets you anywhere. There's no purpose. There's no need.

C: Especially as people who have been through so much, just dealing with bullshit from people.

That generosity of spirit comes across.

I: That's what we want at the end of the day. Like when I meet people or fans or anyone, I just want them to go away from that experience feeling good, happy and positive.

C: Yes!

I: I don't want fans to come up to me and tell me how beautiful I look. I want to be the most beautiful I can be so that I can go up to you and tell you how beautiful you are. That's what drag is to me. That's what I get out of it—letting people who really don't feel that way, *feel that way*. And feel that way from a fucking goddess! I want Aphrodite, bitch, telling you you're everything!

C: Yes!

I: That's why I want this platform, that's what I want to do with it—above all else. Performing, lip-synching, that's all good but I want to reach people.

C: We've been through too damn much to not help somebody else who may be feeling some type of god damn way.

You call out Trxie Mattel's Chinese food runway look for cultural appropriation and the casting of the Pit Crew for not embracing a range of body types. Where did you learn your politics?

I: A lot of Tumblr and just being online but also actually giving a fuck about what people are saying. I'm a talker. It's important to not just exercise your body but your mind and really discuss things that might not ever affect you in your life, so you can be more knowledgeable about how other people feel and what other people go through.

Coco, in one of your life updates, a viewer asks what scene you would walk out at how in history. You say the voguing balls of *Paris is Burning*—but then catch yourself and talk out about that was actually a very hard time for gay people and people of color.

C: I would love to put it down to, 'Oh yeah, thank you, I'm great,' but it also comes from fucking living it. Fucking living on these streets and having people making your life shit for whatever that reason might be. How can I be living that life and not have an understanding? Obviously I'm not trying to compare myself. But shit, these people are real people and you have to think about how they go through real-ass fucking shit. It ain't so easy. It ain't just, 'Oh pretty, fishy, cunty whatever.' It ain't that simple.

Do you want to be on *Drag Race*?

I: I don't think that I'm prepared. I live in Gibraltar, I don't have many friends, I don't have anyone helping me. I'm only just trying to have my mom teach me how to sew—and she don't even too much know! So I'm like, how am I going to get to *Drag Race* with three dresses and a dream? I don't think that would work. But if Ru called? I'd be on the plane.

C: She follows us. That's a little bit of a sign, right? She sees us. Like, are you serious that on the show now, we're here in season seven and they are literally doing Hieeeeeeeee and Bleeeeeeeee.

I: Like all the time!

The Drag Cruise was a life changing experience?

C: Completely. We heard of the Al and Chuck *Drag Race* cruise and there was a competition so we said bitch, lets do it. We were willing to do whatever in the Brighton fucking minus-two weather, get-in-the-sea, get-in-the-ocean, bitch—like we was ready. We was going to do whatever it took to be on that cruise. And we won and it was fucking dope.

I: We met loads of people. Coco Montrese was looking for us...

C: And we met all the Season 5 girls...

I: And a lot of people on the boat knew us. All day long people were coming up to us—which we were not expecting.

C: At all.

I: Keep in mind, we come from a life of not really having a crew or any friends. We don't really see anyone. And then you go to America and suddenly people are talking to you all the time and know your name.

C: We got a shout-out during a Q&A with all of the queens on the boat.

I: We hung out with Michelle [Visage] at the buffet the morning we got there!

C: Oh my god!

It inspired you to want to move to America.

C: It showed us that it was real!

I: I feel like our audience is American. I feel like the people who get us are American. I feel like that is where we would really blossom. America is where you go when you want to reach your dreams and do it big.

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