

Drag performer astounds

BY HELEN DUFFY

It is not often that our campus welcomes performers who push the envelope and try to explain gender and sexual issues. But on Tuesday, sponsored by five Lafayette organizations, Dred Gerestant performed an hour-long show that she has brought to many different countries, age groups, and genders. Featured on HBO, MTV, and the Oxygen Network, she is well known for the unique and exploratory nature of her one-woman show: *Welcome to the "D.R.E.D. (Daring Reality Every Day) Love Experience."*

It is apparent from the moment the performance starts that it is something that will be different and insightful. Through rhythmic and carefully constructed prose, music, and storytelling, Gerestant told her story: one of self-discovery, gender exploration, performing as a "drag king" and finally about understanding and loving who we are. She brought humor and universality to her experiences — of performing in drag at an all-woman's youth conference, dressing up as a pimp for a contest, and her own initial experience that prompted her to express herself as a drag king performer.

Gerestant used many different methods to express her story: colored wigs, costumes, tone of voice (often switching between male and female voice patterns) and even male facial paint. She was remarkably convincing as a man but always held onto her own identity as a woman, despite a cleanly shaven head. An able and natural performer, she flowed across the stage with ease

and poise and possessed a distinct, refreshing comfort level throughout her presentation.

It was through her performance, a conglomerate of singing, lip-synching, acting, and storytelling, that Gerestant infused the audience with her message. She promoted being yourself and being comfortable expressing yourself — even if that differs from societal judgment. At the very core of her gender-bending and exploration of societal taboos, Gerestant's most important message was one of wanting all of us to be comfortable in our own skin, and accepted for who we are.

Gerestant's performance of the *Dred Love Experience* was a powerful performance that challenged the audience to think beyond gender perception on a deeper level. We can all relate to trying to discover who we really are, and by the end of the hour-long show, Gerestant's audience was able to take a good look at how they appreciate themselves. The performance was incredibly different and refreshing to see on campus, promoting a positive, universal message in an accepting and diverse format.