Free to Be...

May 1, 2001 By Angelo Ragaza

(S)he's in there, men, your inner gender illusionist, just waiting to be unleashed. And *How to Be a Drag Queen 101*, the new how-to video by director Stephen Winter (*Chocolate Babies*), is your ticket to transcendence. Sure, the production values are pure Robin Leach (witty and warm hostess Sherry Vine spreads her, er, wisdom from the back of a stretch limo, swathed in mink). But with an earnest desire to educate, the video expounds on the art and science of gender illusionism in mesmerizing detail. From body-hair removal to "tucking" to synthetic vs. human-hair wigs, *How to Be...* shows that doing drag is like making the perfect omelet: There's far more imagination and skill involved than the end product suggests -- and, of course, you have to break those eggs. Along with the help of wig and makeup experts, drag "technician" Tobi Armstrong (HIV positive since 1995 and formerly a special-events manager at AIDS Project Los Angeles) transforms four nervous young men into larger-than-life divas who throw all caution to the wind. But the final stunning makeovers go deeper than skin: Drag frees the guys, physically and emotionally. Let's hope Armstrong and Winter make the sequel, *How to Be a Drag King 101*, and that they lavish as much silly and sisterly advice as they did on this smart, surprisingly moving video. Get *How to Be...* by contacting www.tlavideo.com or 212.598.0074.

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Also check out *The Eyes of Tammy Faye*, a campy and strangely engaging documentary about Tammy Faye Bakker Messner. It tests the power of tear-proof mascara, especially during a mid-'80s clip in which she wails about the mistreatment of PWAs. Her former talk-show cohost, HIVer Jim J. Bullock, and *POZ* cover shutterbug Greg Gorman both preach their loyalty to the queen of televangelism. On video and Cinemax, or through the extras-packed www.eyesoftammyfaye.com (send a TammyGram to your favorite Christian!).

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