

STEP INTO MY PARLOUR



By Shaun Proulx

## SHAUN PROULX TALKS TO AMANDA LEPORE



*A*s I recently wrote in my *Xtra* column, doesn't it seem like there's a tranny takeover going on these days? Here in Toronto we've got our fair share of profile transsexuals, but perhaps no tranny has bigger profile anywhere than New York's **Amanda Lepore**.

Lepore says that although she was born a boy, growing up in New Jersey, she always knew she wasn't. In fact, dressed as a boy, people still mistook Lepore for a girl. With a schizophrenic mother constantly hospitalized, all attention was diverted from Lepore and her brother, who consequently grew up in the care of nannies.

A path to girlhood was the only road Lepore could take, and she embarked on that journey as soon as puberty hit. By age 13 Lepore was growing her hair long and arching her eyebrows, wearing light make up to school. By age 15 she had her first cosmetic surgery and by the end of high school Lepore underwent a full sex change.

Later, finding herself trapped in a suburban marriage she hated, and with nothing but time on her hands to continue indulging in cosmetic procedures, Lepore to New York City, bursting upon the nightlife scene and never looking back. Becoming a muse for the photographer David LaChapelle took her notoriety to new heights, and these days Lepore has parlayed her one-of-a-kind look into successes such as a VH1 show, a sold-out doll, and even a Swatch watch, which, by the way, was Swatch's fastest selling limited-edition timepiece ever.

Lepore hits Toronto this long weekend to reprise her role of Eve at Opulence In Eden at Sonic Nightclub. I recently chatted with Lepore on the phone about her claim that she is the world's #1 transsexual, why anyone would want Lepore merchandise, and what she most wants to be remembered for.



**Your website says you are the world's #1 transsexual. How does one get to be the #1 transsexual in the world, and what does that mean, exactly?**



I thought it was fun to say that in interviews and then it just started to be what other people said about me. It's like how Michael Jackson called himself the King of Pop so often that people now call him that.



**What was your first plastic surgery when you were fifteen?**



It was a nose job. The second surgery was a full sex change.



**How many surgeries have you had since?**



I don't know. I've lost track. But I haven't been doing anything but maintenance. I have achieved what I wanted. After my sex change I was more natural, but then I got married and my husband didn't want me to do anything, so I had a lot of time on my hands. I was always stuck in the house, so I had a lot of time to tweak. Even though I look really extreme, the things I did were subtle. Like when I had my ribs done – that only took off an inch.



**How long a process has this been if you had your first surgery at fifteen? I guess by default what I'm actually asking you is how old you are.**



I am a grown woman, that's all I'll say. A full-fledged woman!



**Who were the inspirations for your surgeries?**



Those bombshells I always liked, like Jayne Mansfield, or even Jessica Rabbit. And drawings of pinups. They were really girly and so feminine, and the skin was soft and the waist was really little. It also had a lot to do with hair and makeup as well. I am a celebration of being a woman, with artifice as well.



**Do you think you'd be where you are today if it weren't for the way you look?**



I think I made a whole career with my looks. I don't think I was the best looking person, I just knew how to make myself look good. It's one of my talents. If I never went out to clubs or things I would have been a good makeup artist or clothing designer. I'm very committed to those things, daily.



### **What is it about you that made you a muse for David LaChapelle?**



In high school, before he knew me, he used to make drawings of these women who looked like me. Big cheeks and lips and voluptuous bodies and I flipped out when I met him and he showed me them. I couldn't believe it. He was obsessed about these drawings. So it had nothing to do with being transgendered or the It Girl in the nightclub scene. And then, when he photographed me, the photos became so successful. David was already big, and he could get anyone he wanted, but he was really flipped out over me because I looked like something from his mind.



### **Why an Amanda Lepore doll?**



Somebody approached me about it. It was ironic because I when was a little boy and I was miserable, dolls were the only thing that made me happy. I had no friends, I was an outcast because I was so feminine, and the first pleasure I had was playing with dolls. They were a role model to me.



### **Oprah would call that a full-circle moment.**



I kind of just did something against the odds and beat the system. Everything I was doing was right for me, even though people thought I was crazy, wasting my time. People thought it was stupid but it was validated later. I just did it for myself because I just wanted to be happy. But amazing things happened from it. It's really an example of holding on to your dreams and doing what you want in life and that it will work out eventually.



### **The Time Tranny Swatch was the fastest selling limited edition Swatch watch ever. Why do you think people want to own Amanda Lepore things?**



I'm kind of a role model for not having to do with what your parents expect and the watch and the doll are a kind of a symbol of that. What you did is against the odds but it turned out great.



### **What can we expect from your upcoming Toronto appearance at Eden?**



You're gonna get a Renaissance Eve!



### **When it's all said and done, what do you want to be remembered for?**



*(Long pause.)* That I beat the system. And lead a really happy, successful life, despite what things seemed in the beginning to people.