



## Interview with Cyon Flare

By Windy City Times

Robert Cyon Flare is famous for setting the hearts of Boystown bar patrons aflame (pun intended) with an infectious, positive energy and vibrant, Technicolor costumes. In fact, the appeal of Flare (whose entertainment persona shuns the first name) actually shines far beyond Lakeview, fueled mainly by two Billboard-charting dance hits: In 2008, "Everybody, Everybody," hit number 31 and, just a year later, "Rise" rose to number 36 on the charts.

In his first interview with Windy City Times, Flare, 39, a resident of Lakeview, revealed what it's like to walk into Sidetrack "out of paint," how Cyon Flare has become something of a nightclub therapist and why he's not a fan of RuPaul's Drag Race.

**WCT:** (Windy City Times) Do you identify yourself as a drag queen or a performance artist?

**RCF:** (Robert Cyon Flare) I live and breathe my feathers every day. It's not as if there is one box for "Robert" and one for "Cyon!" Just look at how I sign my e-mails: Robert Cyon Flare. To put it simply, Robert/Cyon is not a separate being, but wholly one soul, one mind. We, being gay, for whatever reason, have clung to the word "drag," but it is all art. At its essence, what I do is so artistic, but everyone does it to a certain extent. When you get up in the morning and get ready for work, you ask yourself, 'what am I going to wear to work today, am I feeling this blue shirt or this white one?' And that's what I do, but I just take it a few steps further. [Laughs]

**WCT:** You are known for your vibrant, outrageous costumes. How do you select what you are going to wear each night?

**RCF:** Every time I go to bed and every afternoon when I wake up—and this is the truth, Tony—the first thing I think about is, how am I feeling, and how am I going to pull something together? Over the years, I've become very aware that when you dress yourself, based on how you are feeling—other people will feel it, and that sort of guides my process. But my favorite color is blue.

**WCT:** It's no surprise, then, that the color blue was the inspiration for your stage name!

**RCF:** I researched the color blue and found "cyan," which is a bluish-green. However, I wanted it to be spelled with an "O" and pronounced like "scion," as in "an heir or a descendant." "Flare" comes from solar flare, which is associated with the sun. This flare is what helps to nourish all life on our planet, and it is where we get our energy to light up our nights. I wanted a name that didn't mean "male" or "female," but something that represented the soul energy that is within us all.

**WCT:** What was the inspiration behind your famed Mickey Glitter balls headpiece—perhaps your most recognized costume?

**RCF:** People respond to the Mickey glitter balls with such affection, I can't even begin to describe to you the kind of reaction I continue to get when I wear them! Actually, Tony, I made the headpiece for selfish reasons. Let me backtrack for a second: One thing you should know about me is that I believe in getting what you truly want—and I have always wanted to work at Gay Disney. I don't necessarily love the character of Mickey Mouse per se, as much as I love Disney World and the whole concept of family and joy and wonderment. So, I made the headpiece for myself, because I knew that some day I would be a part of Gay Disney, somehow, someday. In 2008, I flew to Orlando and I was staying at the Parliament House, and I went, out of paint, to the Gay Days management office with my press kit in hand, and I knocked on the door. I spoke to someone in the

office, gave them the materials, and don't you know two days later I got the call to be a part of Gay Days at Disney!

**WCT:** Who have been your biggest influences?

**RCF:** Sylvester, Boy George and RuPaul have been big influences on me, in that order.

**WCT:** It sounds like you might be a big fan of RuPaul's Drag Race?

**RCF:** You know, Tony, I watched RuPaul's Drag Race for Jade and for Nina Flowers. I actually knew Jade before the show; he's an amazing dancer and has a gorgeous and sweet spirit, and I was rooting for both of them. But I have to tell you that I am not what you would call a fan of the show. I have an issue when someone is over you and telling you that you are not good enough. As a young performer or drag queen, someone could walk away from the show thinking that they have to look a certain way or act a certain way in order to be fierce or in order to be successful—and that's simply not true.

**WCT:** Tell me something about Robert Cyon Flare that might surprise people?

**RCF:** I do a lot of listening, Tony, when I am out. It's interesting because people feel a certain level of comfort with you and they will share with you their day or their week, or they will tell you someone in their family has died or that they have just discovered their boyfriend or their girlfriend is cheating on them.

Now, my purpose, my goal, is to be a host and an entertainer, of course, I'm not a counselor, but I can be because I am open to people. Every night someone comes up to me and tells me about a broken heart, or that they are having relationship problems—every night! I remember there was a bachelorette group in the bar, and one of the girls came up to me and said the bride was crying and that she could not stop. I didn't know what I could possibly say to this person, but I went over to her, gave her a hug, took off my wig and put it on her head. People started taking pictures of her and, before you know it, she was fine!

**WCT:** Are some people seemingly freaked out by your appearance?

**RCF:** You know, Tony, I don't approach everybody, because different people are in the club for different reasons. Some people are freaked out by the way I look! Some drag queens are known for embarrassing people, but I don't do that. I will never say anything embarrassing to people in the club that I do not know.

**WCT:** Do people recognize you when, as you say, you are not "in paint?"

**RCF:** I go out when I'm not in paint, sure. I love going to Showtunes at Sidetrack on Sunday. It's funny because some guys who are really nice to me when I see them on Friday night are bitches when I approach them on Sunday! I usually just smile, and tell them I am Cyon Flare, and that I was the one that they were huggin' and kissin' and taking pictures with earlier in the weekend and they usually go "Ooooh, Okay!"

**WCT:** Are you dating anyone?

**RCF:** I haven't dated anyone in six years. I haven't met what I would consider "the one" for me. I'm not gonna give you a list of what I am looking for in a guy; I won't go there [laughs], but I will tell you that I believe it is all about timing. You know, I tell guys in the bar all the time that they hot and, because of that, I think the biggest misconception about me is that I am some love-hungry, love-starved individual. But, you see, when I tell guys that I find them attractive, it doesn't mean that I want to date them! Look, I am fine with myself, from the time I get up to the time I go to bed. I am fine with who I am, so I have no problem telling others how I feel about them—but I am

not some love-starved drag queen!

**WCT:** You are obviously very comfortable in your own skin, Cyon. Did your upbringing have any influence on who you are today?

**RCF:** Well, my mom, Ida, is gay. She came out when I was around four years old. I think she had just grown tired of living a lie. I have multiple siblings, some with different fathers ... and then one day I noticed that there were no men coming over anymore and, the next day, I noticed that women were coming over. For me, I didn't really notice anything different. I believe I had a normal life growing up, I had the same growing pains that everybody else had. For me, the shock wasn't my family's reaction to my mom, because they were very accepting of her. What was shocking to me was the outside world, and how they reacted to her. You have to remember this was in the '70s in Detroit, so that was a very different time. I came out to her when I was 13. She said she knew, probably because I was walking around in cha-cha heels by the time I was 5 years old!

**WCT:** You've had two songs on Billboard's dance charts: "Everybody, Everybody" and "Rise." Talk about your newest release, "Fire."

**RCF:** I worked with a new producer on this track, DJ Dealer, who is a Chicago house DJ. The song is about what music does to you. It's about the beat, which is like fire shut up in your bones. I took that concept from church, when the preacher always used to say, "The spirit of the Lord is shut up in your bones," and I translated it to music. It's a basic house beat, and not as techno as the other two tracks. I love it! We're working on the video for it now.

**WCT:** You've conquered the dance charts and the local nightlife scene, Cyon. What's next for you?

**RCF:** You know, Tony, I really wish that all those who bring light to our community nightlife would work together more often— since we all have a common goal to entertain the community and make them feel happy. Separately, Circuit Mom, Miss Foozie, Frida Lay, Ms. Kitty, Veronica, Sal-E, Jo Jo Baby [and] Bobby Pins are amazing at what they do! But I want to see all of us come together for an event where we all use our energy and charisma to raise money and consciousness, for HIV/AIDS; or for the homelessness; or for youth and equality issues. Can you imagine how powerful that would be? I'm calling out to you ladies. Let's come together and make some big magic for our community as a fierce Chicago force!

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*Cyon Flare performs weekly at Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted. Visit [www.hydratechicago.com](http://www.hydratechicago.com) for more information.*

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