

Pretty Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Ryan Rudewicz

JVN: Hey, curious people, welcome to Pretty Curious, our podcast on all things beauty. This week we're talking to award winning nightlife photographer, Ryan Rudewicz. Ryan Rudewicz is a Polaroid photographer based in Brooklyn, New York. He specializes in taking photos of queer nightlife, drag and portraits. Ryan is also the winner of the 2023 Glam award for New York's best nightlife photographer. Ryan has photographed so many incredible people including Idina Menzel and so many queens from Drag Race like Rosé, Jan, and Monét X Change. He also took the photo for Dylan Mulvaney's new single Blue Christmas. I'm asking Ryan all things photography: like how can we be hotter on pictures? How can you also take a better picture? Like if you're that person who your friend is always like, "You take terrible pictures of me," like maybe they're right and maybe you do need to take better pictures or maybe you're like, "How come I always look like that?" And Ryan's a great person to talk to. But before we go to that conversation, it's time to get ready with me.

Ariana did it again, you guys. Yes, and is the moment she's everything; you saw it was all up on curiouswithjvn celebrating that art cover, which got me back into my r.e.m. makeup drawer, which I am a big fan of Ariana's line, r.e.m. it's fabulous. But can I just say after talking to Jenn Harper—and by the way, still obsessed with our Cheekbone Beauty obsessed, like their eye pencils are everything—but now it made me want to use like every eye pencil like multi-use eye pencil that I have, which brought me to the r.e or to the, which brought me back to the r.e.m. multi-use eye pencils. Um I love them. I love their texture. I love the consistency. I'm using this one today that's like giving me this like kind of nude eye. Uh so I love the Cheekbone eye pencils. I'm also loving the r.e.m. eye pencils. Uh I just love it. I think for me, I really, the Cheekbone is giving me like uh they're, they're really both just beautiful formulas. I really like both. I really like how long-wear both are. Um I, I do find that I'm really loving the nudes of the r.e.m. and I'm liking the colors of cheekbone, but again, love both. They're both fabulous.

Let's get into some beauty news and hot takes. You guys, this is a big development for me. Uh this, I have realized my friend Denise and I um if you follow my Instagram, you will remember that I after my surgery, uh Denise came in town and stayed with me for a little bit because Mark had to go to England to see some of his family. I wasn't able to make the trip being in my little post-op state. Uh but Denise and I had this long dissertation on eyebrows and we both realized that my eyebrows have been not too long by hair strand, but like the tail of my eyebrow was going down too low. It was like going to like the, it was almost going down to like my eye, like it was like hooking down too far. And so we, there's this technique that you can use with like an like any sort of like makeup brush where you can measure like where your eyebrow should start and then the, where the height of the arch should be and then where it should end by using like a straight line right up against your nose and then like 45 degree angle from your nose and then like, um, it's not 45 whatever. We'll, we'll put it on Instagram, but I realized that my eyebrow like the tail of my eyebrows was too long. So we tweeze them off. We made a new shape and it lifted my face so hardcore you guys, we're not going back to the nineties. It's not like an overly tweezed brow. It's just making sure that like the tail of your brow isn't going down too low. So I kind of tweezed that off. I lifted it and it just, it just made me look more awake. I'm vibing. It's like my new brow shape for 2024. So really, I feel like brows, they are going through another evolution because for the last two years I've just been like that bushy girl. I wanted my, I wanted my brow gel. I wanted to stick

my brows straight up. I just wanted my brows to be as big and old man looking as possible because I felt like the bigger the brow, the more youthful it was making me vibe. Um but really now I found that it was kind of actually dragging me down. So I've trimmed those girls. I've taken the ends up a little bit. Um, and that's the brow shape that I'm giving for 2024. So I do feel like new brows are upon us for 2024. That is a, that is a hot take. I do feel like that's happening. So let's maybe revisit our eyebrow shapes as we proceed.

Also, Charlotte Tilbury...everywhere. I just feel like Charlotte Tilbury is everywhere. Um, Busy was just talking about it. Uh everyone did. Everyone I know is like into Charlotte Tilbury again right now. Um Busy was wearing the Beautyverse eyeshadow palette. It has like neutrals and colors. Uh, it's gonna be, it has your lilacs, it has your pinks. Um, it has matte and metallics. So that palette, I'm actually going to be testing for our next episode of Pretty Curious because I need to get into, I need to get into it. Also, Charlotte Tilbury is coming to Ulta stores in February, so get ready.

Val Garland, worldwide Artistic Director of Makeup at L'Oréal Paris is predicting that in 2024 matte makeup is coming back with a twist. She thinks that we're moving away from dewy skin to matte. But with this like luminous contouring style that's friendlier for all skin types. So I think what that's kind of being lovingly to me that's kind of like that cloud finish. It's like matte but it still kind of glows from within. I've been kind of trying to do more of that with my finish. I feel like Gigi Goode started to predict that for us last year. Um so I've been trying to do that. I notice that for me, it I think depending on I really like my Kosas powder that's been on the getting ready with me segment before. I just notice that every once in a while it does settle, like it settles more after like all day than when I just stick with my creams. Um but I still like it and I think it's a, it's a pretty look. Um just, you know, saying it, it just, I feel like it kind of settles more and even when I set it like still just, it's like you, I don't know, just so any makeup artist who want to slip into our DMs and like how to make your cloud finish makeup last longer. We're here for the tips. We love the tips and thank you for listening. Also, you guys, just sidebar. My feet have been so crusty, so nasty. It was the Emmys. I was giving you an open toed shoe like my stylist Ali B was like, "Check your feet before you get here. Like, don't show up with those feet again." So what I've been doing is I've been taking this, um I've been taking this like um AHA, it's like an alpha hydroxide face serum and I've been putting it on my heels and like my nasty feet skin and then covering that in moisturizer and then putting like a big fluffy sock over it and sleeping in it. And I have to say you guys, it's really making a difference on that dead skin build up. So if you can take an AHA, that's like not the most expensive one. There is some body serums that have A H A in it that's like for body um which you could get into, but i it has really been helping my feet. So if your feet be feeling nasty, try introducing an AHA like an alpha hydroxy, an alpha hydroxy acid um into your routine and seeing if that can kind of buff off. It's like more of like that chemical exfoliation versus like an actual, like, you know, buffing exfoliation, um, for them, for them. Uh, what are we dogs for them dogs. Uh, ok. So, which, but we don't, why do it's like our episode of like, kinship with dogs? Why do we have to, like, be, you know, dogs are great. They don't have nasty. Well, they do have weird feet sometimes. Ok. Whatever. Another gorgeous getting ready with me segment in the books for Pretty Curious, our beauty podcast every Monday, thank you for listening to our new show. We love Pretty Curious, but now it's time for us to toss to our conversation with our guest this week, Ryan Rudewicz. Ok, Ryan. So we're minding our own business on Pretty Curious and because Pretty Curious is like our podcast on like all things beauty, um so far we've kind of focused on like, you know, kind it's giving external, it's giving like DIY, it's giving like how, you know, you're like, but then also it's like

we've had some guests where it's like their approach to beauty. Um but then our producer, Chris, who we love so much, uh Chris was like, Ryan, like is the moment but like timeless, classic, forever. Never going anywhere. The, the most recent winner of the 2023 Glam Award for New York's best nightlife photographer. And I was like, do we need to do an episode on like how to take like, hotter, more sexual pictures? Like how to be hotter in pictures, but also how to take better pictures? So that's the setup, you know?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: I'm honored.

JVN: Can you set this stage like for the Glam Awards? Like, what are they? Obviously, I know, but just for everyone else.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Um yeah, they are kind of like the Oscars of New New York City nightlife. Um so they're happening on the 22nd and it's um kind of everyone from nightlife is in the room and it will be at Sony Hall. Um which also every night that I'm there, I'm like, so who's working tonight? Because we're all in the same room right now. But um...

JVN: What night of the week is it?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: It's a Monday.

JVN: Oh, well, that's probably why, right, because like is Monday like a sleepy nightlife scene?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Yeah. Yeah, kind of. Um uh but yeah, so there's, I mean, there's Entertainer of the Year, there's Breakthrough Artist. Um And it kind of just encapsulate, encapsulates all of nightlife. Um And uh it's, it's just nice to be with all of your peers and we, we obviously all work together every night. But um it's nice to kind of hang and celebrate each other. Uh Yeah, so I got into it in 2021/22. So that was the first time I was nominated. Um and then I was nominated last year and I uh surprisingly won and I'm nominated again this year.

JVN: So you really found your, your love, your love of photography stemmed from Polaroids like that kind of, is it the instant quality of it or is it the imperfection?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: I love, I mean, like, again, yes, I always loved taking photos but it wasn't until college that I just started bringing the camera to like parties or dumb events with friends. And um I used to write on all of them like a word that would kind of capture whatever that party was or that moment that I took the photo. Um and it was just so much fun to then—the way I did it, at least in my dorm room is I had from like junior all the way to senior year, all the photos I took. So it was kind of like a museum in a way like a gallery. Uh people would always come into my room and they would start from the beginning and go all the way to the end and they could see like my years in college or then when I moved to New York. Two of my favorite drag queens, Kiki Ball-Change and Castrata have a show on Tuesdays at Pieces um called Two Stupid Queens. And so I started going and I would bring my camera. Um but I was, I was like, scared to take photos during the show because I didn't like it makes a sound, the flash is bright. I didn't want to distract or draw attention. Um so I started taking their like photo after the show outside when we would just chat. Um And then it was just one day, one of them was like, "Ryan, we can see you like itching to take a photo during the show, take the photo like you can do it." Um And so I started doing that and it was, it just kind of took off from there and no one is, I don't think anyone is more prepared to have their photo taken than a drag queen. Um because they always look amazing and they want their photo taken.

Um uh and I just, I love holding a photo like we don't get to do that a lot anymore because we have so many up in the cloud. Like I take photos on my phone, never look at them later. Um these I can hold and it's just really special to me.

JVN: Like for you as a photographer, like what do you notice about like your subjects when you're like, "Oh, this turned out really good or if they would have just given me like a little bit more like ah like," what is it like? What do you feel like makes a good picture?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: I think it's not thinking about it. So when I do portrait sessions with people um say it's like an hour session, I usually sit down, we're chatting for like 30 minutes because I want to get to know you and like understand because it'll help me capture your energy. Um but then as we, if, if I have you like sitting on the couch and I'm just like staring at you. I never am like, "Okay, 1,2,3," because I would rather um still talking like this and we're talking about like where did you grow up? Oh my God, Massachusetts. Me too. And then I click the photo because you're laughing or something. Um and you're unsuspecting of that I'm about to take the photo because if I say 1,2,3, you get in your head a little bit and then you're like, oh, it just, it doesn't always work.

JVN: Oh my God. OK. That's hard.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: So, I mean, I think at least for me, like, and it goes along with Polaroid and why I love it so much because it's very like in the moment I just snapped it and that's the one moment in time. And if that's it, that's it.

JVN: How could you teach someone to see the beauty in photography that maybe they don't understand? Like they don't necessarily like, what are you looking for in a photo that you're like, oh, that's really beautiful or there's something about that that like, how do you interpret beauty in a photo?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: I find the beauty in photos is from storytelling and I think maybe that's like my theater background and I love trying to put myself into that photo and like, understand like, who are these people in it or what's what's going on? Why did the the photographer capture this moment? And that makes me kind of understand the beauty or find the beauty within it.

JVN: Ahhh! That's gorgeous, honey, you're teaching us how to be an artist. Now not to go from that pinnacle to this one other thing. But I just would be remiss if I didn't ask, did you see on TikTok earlier this year or it was like Instagram where there was like that one that one like bouncer like that one queen bouncer who read that girl to filth who was trying to like talk her way into the front of the line in like a New York City nightlife. And he and like, and everyone was like, yeah, that guy's like to like don't ever fucking come for him. And that girl was like, what did he say to her that was so funny. I if you don't remember off the top of your head, I know Chris will probably know. But what it was something like so like the man, like they, the only thing they do is run away. You could write a book. Oh you could fill a book with all this shit you don't know or whatever.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: What was it or wait, maybe I'm thinking of a different because I'm thinking of the one that was like, "The only time you've been fucked is by genetics."

JVN: Oh Yes, that one. I'm thinking like a book of the things, Chris, can you pull up that clip and is it possible to listen to that clip together? Just like it's totally non sequitur. But I, I just think it's like queer joy. Like we're going through a lot in this day and age and if, if these

people didn't hear it listening to Pretty Curious, like, I just think everyone should have listened because it is like the filth and the, the filth and the spice of this read it like, wow, it was really good...thoughts? Do you know that person?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: I don't think so. I wish!

JVN: Me too, we need to. That's gonna be, that's what I'm curious about. Next next episode, this was like the iconic read of the century. We didn't know we were getting into this on Pretty Curious today but we never know where curiosity takes us. So I will also say that like I did slightly feel like a little bit bad for this girl, but in the words of Chicago, she had it coming. Let's play the clip.

[VIDEO CLIP AUDIO]

JVN: Oh, no, not Canadians! We love Canadians! Oh my God. Uh um That was major. I'm sure you have thoughts on social media as a photographer. Um So this is like, there's eight questions in one here, but it's like thoughts on social media as it relates to photography, one, well, actually let's just go there. Social media and photography: is it ruining it? Is it increasing the access? Is it, is that everyone thinks you're a fucking expert now? Like what, what's the deal on on social with photography?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: I mean, like, yes to all of that, I think I obviously love it. It has helped me so much uh especially during COVID and quarantine. I found, through Instagram, so many other Polaroid photographers and just was able to connect with them and share photos, share like I learned so much because we were sharing tips and tricks that I didn't know. Um that just helped my photography uh and then just sharing and seeing other photos. Um so in that aspect, I love it. As well as um at least within like now nightlife and at least with Polaroid like it's instant so I could then post the photo the next day, which I think got me some traction um because it was literally like this is what happened last night or this is the drag queen I saw last night. Um it does hinder because unfortunately, like with Instagram and policies and meta, um there are certain things that they don't like and it, it could even be the way whatever someone is wearing and it's perfectly normal to be wearing that. But for some reason, the bots and the algorithm doesn't like it and then the photo gets banned or like your account gets shut down. Um so the policing of that, it's, it's hard uh as well as we live like Instagram and all of, all of the apps, all of social media. It's um you, you wanna look your best and it's like you have to be always on and this is how perfect life is. Um so it's, I mean, I think we all feel that way of like, "Look, I'm, I'm out and about having a great time. I'm smiling with all of my friends," and then like you put the phone down and people are just on their phones at the club or at the drag show and you're like, be be present, be within the moment.

JVN: Okay but speaking of social and yours, um rude polar or rude polaroids, what? Tell us about it. Tell us about it.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Yes. Um okay so I always was taking Polaroids since like 2016. Um And in college, like my whole Instagram was pretty much Polaroids but uh it used to be like Ryan Roods because of my last name. And then it wasn't until COVID that I was, I just changed it one day and I got the inspiration um from my brother who has his own business called Crude Bitters and Sodas and he makes like cocktail bitters. Um And his first name is Craig. So he put c and rude together to make crude. And I was like, well, my name is Ryan so I can't like put another r in why not just rude Polaroids and it, it just kind of stuck. Um and I think it kind of works but um...

JVN: It's so good.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Yeah. And it wasn't like it, it just kind of stuck and got people started remembering it and seeing a Polaroid and remembering rude and um especially with nightlife, like sometimes it can be a little like rude, crude photos and um yeah, it just worked. So I kind, it's just kind of went from there.

JVN: So I feel like what I've already taken from your work is just like celebrating life, celebrating the energy of a moment—which is really another way about celebrating presence—and trying to like not be so stuck in the future or the past, but like celebrating what is now and then it's like almost the images are a reminder of that presence and like of people's energy which um...

RYAN RUDEWICZ: I, I enjoy um I want people to feel like they can, they're in that photo. So if they are looking at one of my Polaroids or a film photo, um whether it's blown up or actual size, I want them to kind of step into it and, and understand what was going on or what the story I'm trying to tell is and maybe where, like you think it's a different story and I think it's a different story, but at least you're getting a story. Um my uh growing up, I had a gay uncle who was amazing, incredible. Um and when he passed in 2020 my mom and I like, found an old Polaroid camera and then I found like a shoe box full of all these Polaroids that I didn't even know he had or took. Um but when he was, he was living in Provincetown and they are just like, some of them are not great photos. They're just photos of him and his friends in the late '90s, early 2000s like laughing and you can see they're at a restaurant or at dinner and it's just something so special because also I can hold it and I feel like it's a piece of him, but that's what I want to celebrate. So even if they're, it's a photo of my friends like laughing so hard that you don't know that person, but you see how joyful it is and like you want to be in that moment.

JVN: Uh, show in Provincetown coming up this year, you're showing a whole new side of your work. It's giving bodies, giving sensuality, it's giving like light of day, honey, we're not all out. Um so you're in Provincetown where is, where can we see it and where can people support your work?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Yeah. Um So it'll be August 23rd through Labor Day, September 2nd um at Studio Lacombe in Provincetown. Um It's in Whalers Wharf. Uh Yeah, I'll be there the whole time. So please say hi if you're there. Uh it's like the week of Carnival until Labor Day Week. Um And then as well, my Instagram is Rude Polaroids as well as my website, rudepolaroids.com. Um I have print, I enlarge my um Polaroids and blow them up so you can buy prints. Um and I'm slowly, hopefully it's getting there making merch as well as I really want to make a coffee table book um just of like nightlife and this is what it is.

JVN: Ryan, we love that for you and also we love your shirt and also we need a picture of your shirt to like post on our 'gram when this episode comes out because this shirt is just so fucking cute. All the sidebar. Are you ready to play our rapid fire, our rapid fire closing segment. OK. Rapid fire. What's your go to Jesus Christ? Rapid fire. What's your go to budget beauty recommendation?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Um I'm such a like slut for Burts Bees chapstick. I need it. Love it always. It's my favorite.

JVN: OK. OK. OK. Um Splurge recommendation

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Um spa day; like truly going in and it's it sometimes for me, like it's once a year, maybe it's my birthday but having a full on spa day, massage, facial, everything, it's worth it.

JVN: It feels so good. I love laying in those beds.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: And I feel better. Yeah.

JVN: Ok. This is a little overlap on what you said first but you're going to find a new one: a product you never leave home without.... your Polaroid?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Um, truly, like, I always have a Polaroid.

JVN: Uh, but what else?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Um, I, um...

JVN: Poppers, just kidding.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Uh I've, I've tinted like I have a tinted pair of sunglasses that are always in my bag. So sometimes I'll wear them out in nightlife so that they're, they're not too tinted, but I can still see and I just like that.

JVN: Ok, I love a moody sunglass. Um what was your, what is your most inspiring beauty memory?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Oooooo, like for myself or for....?

JVN: You call the rules!

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Um watching *Fashion Police* with my mom after every award show like on the Monday. Uh we would just always sit in because I loved the red carpet, but I loved watching Fashion Police of like the Oscars, Golden Globes, all that all.

JVN: R.I.P Joan. I got to do Margaret Cho's hair for that for the last few years of that show. And I just love, oh, she was so good.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: It was my favorite.

JVN: Okay, meh or major: iPhone pics in 0.5

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Major. I think they're so funny.

JVN: Writing on Polaroids

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Uh major. I wanna get back to it.

JVN: Selfie sticks

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Meh

JVN: Selfie time or Jesus Christ self timer

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Meh unless it's with a group of people.

JVN: Kodak filters on iPhone photos

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Meh.

JVN: Um um um um let me just what, what other like Instagram trends are there or like photo trends?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Actually can I say my least favorite?

JVN: Yes.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: I hate fake Polaroids. So I hate when someone puts like a Polaroid border on something because I know! I will always know.

JVN: Don't fucking do it.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Yeah, I hate it.

JVN: Rude Polaroids. Um Rude polaroids.com. You have your show in Provincetown in August. Anything else between now and then?

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Um potentially some exhibits. I just finished an exhibit this weekend in DC. Um And I think we're going to be doing one in Brooklyn in May. So stay tuned. Otherwise I feel like you can just catch me at a drag show or out and about.

JVN: Fuck yes! Ryan, thank you so much for coming on Pretty Curious. We love you so much. Thank you for coming on the show. We appreciate you.

RYAN RUDEWICZ: Thank you! I loved it, it was so fun.

JVN: You've been listening to Pretty Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. You can learn more about this week's guest in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on and follow us on Instagram at curiouswithjvn. Come on, Curious Universe! Still can't get enough? Subscribe to Extra Curious on Apple Podcasts for commercial free listening and our subscription only show, Ask JVN, where we're talking sex relationships and so much more. Our engineer is Nathanael McClure. Our theme music is also composed by Nathanael McClure. Pretty Curious is produced by me, Chris McClure, Julia Melfi and Allison Weiss with production support from Julie Carrillo, Anne Curriw and Chad Hall.