

Pride Toronto's Black, Queer & Trans Excellence Series Podcast EP02

LENGTH

59:51

SPEAKERS

Hollywood Jade, Sandy Duperval

Hollywood Jade 00:00

You're listening to Pride Toronto's Black, Queer & Trans Excellence Podcast, where we honor and celebrate the black experience through the lens of the LGBTQ+ community with honest conversations about embracing Black joy. I'm your host, Hollywood Jade.

Hollywood Jade 00:15

Hello, hello, hello coucou and bonsoir, my name is Hollywood Jade, I am your host back once again for the Black, Queer & Trans Excellence series. I am unbelievably happy and cannot wait to get into this conversation with somebody who has been nothing but a beacon of light, not just to me, but to so many others. She's one of the most beautiful women that I have ever had the pleasure of laying my eyes on. And to top that off then she's unfoundedly, ridiculously talented at an immense amount of things, my guest today is, none other than the one and the only, Sandy Duperval.

Sandy Duperval 01:13

Well, thank you. Hi, Hollywood! (laughter)

Hollywood Jade 01:16

Hi, they can't see you. but I can see you and you look gorge, honey!

Sandy Duperval 01:19

Thank you so much!

Hollywood Jade 01:21

I am, ..it's so crazy that we live in the same city and I haven't seen you for longer than a couple of hours in months. But with COVID that's a lot of people's reality. So how have you been doing, through this?

Sandy Duperval 01:38

It's a roller coaster seriously, every time I think you know what, let's, let's stay positive, And then you know, you're back into stage 2 or lockdown or you don't know what's what anymore, who to believe. I think for me, it's the first time in my life where I feel so like, not in control or not even like it's not even an option. I mean, can I make plans, I don't know, like, what's what's happening? So it's unsettling, but at the same time, I mean, you know my story

I've been through a lot in my life, I've faced, almost faced death myself, I lost a lot of people, and I've had to move from Montreal to Toronto, adapt, so I know that I can get through it, but while I'm in it, I feel like a caterpillar and I can't wait to be a butterfly.

Hollywood Jade 02:32

Baby, that's such a good way of saying it because the truth, truthfully, it has been, it's been an experience for, for most of us and, and navigating this space collectively; I equated it to literally feeling like we are all mourning a death and it's, it's the death of what was. But we all know that everybody handles death differently. So it was like, how do we do this? Um, but yeah.

Sandy Duperval 03:02

I mean, especially as an artist. And I think from the.. I mean the industry was already changing but now it's it's nobody really knows what's next, everybody's trying to be ready. I know a lot of us are going to transition into more online presence, but I also feel like once we're back into like some sort of better reality where we can actually see each other, meet each other, I think we're gonna want to be in each other's presence, I really hope, so I really hope that this confinement is not going to like put us into this kind of like staying away..

Hollywood Jade 03:43

Isolated. Yeah.

Sandy Duperval 03:44

Isolated, right. So I really hope that this makes us see how important it is to socialize and to, to have this human touch. So I'm hoping that once we can, we can hug each other again, and we really embrace each other's presence.

Hollywood Jade 04:01

Whoa! Okay, I will leave, I'ma leave it on that (both laughing) because that's the word, honey! So you were born and raised in Montreal and you started singing at a young tender age of three.

Sandy Duperval 04:13

(laughing) Oh, yes, I started walking and talking and singing. That was..

Hollywood Jade 04:20

at three years old, and then by five you started performing?!

Sandy Duperval 04:26

Yeah. So my first performance was on TV at a show called Passe-Partout, which is a kids TV show, and it's funny because my grandma always saw me singing outside because every time it would rain, I just run out and start singing. And I would sing for so long, the rain would stop and then I run back inside like "Look, I can make the rain stop." So it's always been very powerful and I think from you know, at a young age, I felt like singing was a power. haha

Hollywood Jade 04:56

Wow. And I guess with, with that realization that would set you up to be like "This is what I want to do, I can liter-, I'm storm, I can control the weather."

Sandy Duperval 05:06

Yeah. And it's, it's crazy how it's helped me through the rain in my life. Every time I feel pain, that's when I write my best songs. But at the same time, you know, it's always like, it gives me a bit of anxiety because I have to face my emotions. But at the same time, every time I finished a song, it's, it's like, I'm healed again, and I'm ready for the next adventure. So for me, like, like being an artist is is being my own therapist, but also it keeps me grounded in ways that I don't think I would have otherwise.

Hollywood Jade 05:45

That's so beautiful.

Sandy Duperval 05:48

Thank you...hahaha

Hollywood Jade 05:49

And this is how, I wish I could say that she's putting it on, 'cause we're in an interview and, but this is just how she speaks. Like the day I met her I was just like, you were like you literally like, move like words physicalize into song, like, it's just like, it's so poetic.

Sandy Duperval 06:10

Oh thank you! I think it's the French in me, too. Like, I feel that was one of the things that was kind of the transition from Montreal to Toronto is - yes, most people in Montreal do speak English, or speak both French and English, but our English is, is is different - the way that we'll say certain things, you know, when I first moved in Toronto, it was like, "Where are you from?" Like "I'm from Montreal", and they're like, "Oh, my God, girl." But at the same time, the way I spoke, it was almost like poetry to people because I'll say certain things, the length of my sentences are a little longer, but that's just the way you know, when you speak French, it's, it's, it's a romantic language. So I just feel like my upbringing, my story, the language I speak, it's all part of who I am, and that's my culture, it sums it up for everyone.

Hollywood Jade 07:05

Listen, and I love I love that I said what I said, and then you came with that exact; I'm telling you like when I met you (Sandy laughing). First of all, I was super impressed with you, because...no, we'll get into that, I'll be like, (Sandy laughing) ..yeah, we're gonna revisit it because I think people have a perception of who you are as an artist. But there are so many layers to your artistry.

Sandy Duperval 07:30

Yeah

Hollywood Jade 07:30

Which is why I'm super excited to dig into this. So as a vocalist, some of your influences are noted to be like Whitney Houston, Robin S, Crystal Waters, Tina Turner, and Martha Walsh.

Sandy Duperval 07:44

Yes.

Hollywood Jade 07:45

That is a list of vocally blessed-ness. (both laughing)

Sandy Duperval 07:52

Yes. You know, we're so fortunate. I, I love.. If I could have asked God who I wanted to be, I would have wanted to still be this Black woman, no matter how the system failed us, and no matter how the world is challenging, I find that we managed to make our journey poetic, musical, artistic, and soulful. And that, if I could come back again and again and relive my life, I would not change one thing. So I'm, I'm really blessed. These power vocalists were, were not just amazing in their artistry, but they were amazing in the power of their vocals, and how, you know, music, I believe, is the foundation of civil rights. The way that music has connected us Black people to the rest of the world is undeniable in the history of Black, in Black history. So for me like Whitney Houston, Robin S, and you know, especially when I transitioned from Gospel to House, I didn't feel like I was transitioning into some strange world, I was really transitioning into just still the soulfulness but with the dance floor. I felt like, you know, I wasn't even coming out of church, I was still at church but somebody brought the DJ (both laughing). I seriously like all these power vocalists all of the ways that the, the messages, the songs, it just spoke to me like.. And I remember like first time I heard Robin S, my English was was really bad, but I didn't need to speak amazing English because her vocals connected to me right away. I remember being at that club, like "What is this song?" and you just heard like her

Hollywood Jade 09:58

What song was it?

Sandy Duperval 09:59

Show me Love. (singing) "Oh, oh oh whaaa, you've got to show me" and I was like, "What!!!", " wait, somebody wait!

Hollywood Jade 10:09

Okay!

Sandy Duperval 10:10

Okay.

Hollywood Jade 10:11

Sorry, I wish you guys could see us because we're both looking at each other. We're waving our hands or just like, because honestly, like I remember being a kid and hearing that song for the first time. And I, I do not ever in the, up unto that point in my life, ever remember hearing someone start a song wailing.

Sandy Duperval 10:30

Right, right away, right off the bat. I was like, the heavens just opened its.. it opened its gates and I'm just gonna run there.

Hollywood Jade 10:41

And that beat, like, I was like it literally it's; we are like kindred spirits, 'cause (Sandy laughing) that's how I feel about house music, too. I feel like house music literally is like somebody brought the DJ into praise and worship.

Sandy Duperval 10:56

Yes, oh, yeah! It didn't matter who you were, what your background was what culture you're from, if you heard this song, that was it.

Hollywood Jade 11:05

You felt this song.

Sandy Duperval 11:07

Yeah, and throughout my career, I've seen this like this song was probably one of the the songs that put me on the map, no matter if I went to Morocco, to China, where- whenever I would belt out this song, people felt some familiar familiarity, that they wouldn't have felt otherwise, because I mean, I'm nobody

Hollywood Jade 11:29

They don't know you, girl, in China!

Sandy Duperval 11:32

But they heard the song and suddenly I got their attention. So there is such a power in the music and the journey of the, the artists around us. If it wasn't for these powerful women singers, I don't think I would have had the career that I've had.

Hollywood Jade 11:52

That's such a beautiful love letter. That is such a beautiful love letter. I want to go back and talk a little bit about your journey to being in the club and hearing Robin S because you mentioned transitioning from Gospel music to House music. So let's let's go back.

Sandy Duperval 12:09

(Sandy laughing) Well, this ties up to, to my story as a lesbian, because as a gospel singer, I really struggled from the moment I started performing for 18 years of my gospel career, it was really challenging to find where I belonged. Because, yes, today things are slightly better in the black community when it comes to to queer people. However, it took me 10 years to come out. And it's, it was hard because as an artist I identified with gospel. And now as a person, I couldn't really identify with Christianity because I didn't belong. So it's almost like, I can't pick who I am. I can't pick parts of myself, I have to fully embrace who I am. And it I feel like it although it's made me who I am it, it cost me a lot of time and energy. And if you know, the first time I heard house music, I used to work

in the gay village in Montreal. And I remember going to this after hour for the first time someone said "David Morales is playing! You have to hear him!" He's the, you know, like a legend. I kid you not, I stepped on that dance floor, and suddenly all the pieces of me came together.

Hollywood Jade 13:49

Yeah.

Sandy Duperval 13:50

And, you know, I didn't have to pick my faith. I didn't have to pick my, my culture. I didn't have to pick my message because everything that I believe in was on that dance floor. So you know. I remember it was Barbara Tucker most precious love, which which when you think about it's a gospel song, she's singing to God (starts to sing.)

Hollywood Jade 14:23

(Sings) Precious. Precious Lord...

Sandy Duperval 14:28

And I'm like, Whoooo! And I was looking at people, some people high, some people like just they just showed up. Some people like me, are just looking around like amazed. What is that energy? So 18 years of gospel then I studied jazz music, and I moved to Germany. And when I got to Germany my first time I was doing a show called the tribute to soul legends and I was Diana Ross in that play. And, you know, after whatever...

Hollywood Jade 15:03

Wait stop!...First.. Wait, wait. (both laughing)

You're not just gonna casually say "I moved to Germany, and then I was doing this show, and I was playing Diana Ross." Like, what?!?

Sandy Duperval 15:15

Yeah, I was playing Diana Ross and I had to sing, um (Sings) "He's leaving on the midnight train to Georgia." And it's really crazy to me, because these are songs that I wasn't allowed to listen to, because I come from a like, not just from like, a Pentecostal background where you couldn't like, put conditions, like you couldn't straighten your hair, you couldn't wear pants, makeup...

Hollywood Jade 15:46

No secular music, couldn't watch TV.

Sandy Duperval 15:50

Right, right! So first time, I'm in Germany, I had to learn all these songs, and I'm really taking in Motown and, and I'm like, wait a minute... I need more of that. So every time we had a show, we'd go out to another club, listen to a jazz band to like blues to soul, and I was like, but why? why was I not? Like,

Hollywood Jade 16:20

Allowed to experience...

Sandy Duperval 16:21

Allowed to experience that, because that's our history! So for me, it really became like, there is much more to my blackness than I even know, because I am not exposed to all these things and these are part of our history. So I realized how yeah, Black people in the French world live their black experience differently than people in the English world. And then you have Caribbean people, you have people from the UK, you have Africans, every.. like the black experience is so wide, so vast in, in one of the things that I feel like music introduced me to my culture over and over again.

Hollywood Jade 17:11

See, this is why I need to be on TV because (both laugh)... y'all can't see that I am making my face... It is and, and this is the perspective that I've never thought about for you, like I'm listening to you talk as well; I'm like, wait a second. You, English also isn't your first language.

Sandy Duperval 17:28

No.

Hollywood Jade 17:28

You're also hearing, and I'm imagining learning, Gladys Knight's "Midnight train to Georgia", and hearing all of that pain, and angst. So like, these words now, form differently in your mind, because you probably read all of these words on paper, but to have them tied together this way with all of that – ooh! that's why you sing the way you sing, girl!

Sandy Duperval 17:56

(Laughing) And I feel like it's also, the more you know, the more you share, the more like, the wealth that we have, or we can be exposed to, and that's why I never take anything for granted, because what I know now is still limited. And so I'm like a kid in a candy shop, listening to new music, being exposed to different cultures. When I moved to Toronto, you know, and I didn't realize how, like, Montreal is diverse.

Hollywood Jade 18:31

Mm hmm. But..

Sandy Duperval 18:33

But..(both laughing) I moved to Toronto, you're like, "What? There's other black people on TV, like, you know, that are from here?" Because yes, Quebec is, it's, it's overcome a lot of, of the prejudice and the racism. However, we're still invisible on TV. People of color are still not embraced the way that they should. And so when I moved to Toronto, I was like, it's not a problem, now, it's really just a matter of getting talented people. It's not yeah, it's no longer just this divide, or you are actually part of a culture, you're not the you and them, right?! So you know, I'm being exposed to my own culture made me realize how much I'm going to probably spend my whole life getting to know the roots of who I am. And yeah, so I feel like I'm always just adding more and more knowledge and more passion into what I do, because I'm learning so much from others.

Hollywood Jade 19:44

You... guys, we've been friends for like, I think five years.

Sandy Duperval 19:49

Yeah.

Hollywood Jade 19:50

I'm sitting here in awe listening to you speak. And I think that's the beauty of what is happening in the world and these platforms that are being created, is like, when was when is it an appropriate time for you to sit down and tell me "Oh yeah, I went to Germany and I played Diana Ross," like that doesn't just come up in conversation (both laughing)

Unless you're one of those people who like are constantly bragging about the things that you've done, in which case, we would never be in the same circle. So this is lovely and, and to credit exactly what you're saying it's like, I don't know if there is a black, queer and trans podcast that exists in Saskatoon, or in Vancouver, or, it definitely ain't in Calgary. (Sandy laughing)

So like, like, you know, so that's what's beautiful about Toronto and just a huge shout out to Pride Toronto for continuing something that started off as a one off, as a response to the climate of the world, them asking me to continue to do this. Like it's, it's beautiful that we get to celebrate that this is going to exist in a space where another young queer kid who doesn't feel themselves represented in this music form that they love, or in this environment that they've been cultivated into, can have access to these things.

Sandy Duperval 21:08

Yeah. And you know, it's just showing how diverse the community is, you know, the 2SLGBTQ+ community, no matter where you are, your experience matters. Whether you know, you're a new immigrant or you are first generation second generation in, and no matter where you are, and how out of place you are, I'm happy that Toronto Pride is able to say, "Come inside, and let us introduce you to people who have different backgrounds, and different experiences." And you can choose how you can connect with each of these people. So I'm really happy to be part of this.

Hollywood Jade 21:51

That's so beautiful, oh, my goodness! Um, all right. So most of us who know, Sandy Duperval know her as DJ Sandy Duperval. We are 25 minutes into the conversation and we're just now getting to talk about you being a DJ, because you have a rather extensive resume, and a rather impressive reputation as a DJ. So when did we go from being Diana Ross in Germany? (Sandy laughing) because you're never gonna live that down!

Sandy Duperval 22:30

No, you know what, it's I was always, I always felt attracted to the DJ world. When I was in high school, we had talent shows and first time I saw DJ was one of my classmates; his dad has brought him to turntables. And we were just at that time, I was interested in breakdancing. And then one day, he was like, "yo, you want to try?" and I was like, "stop it." So at that time, I'm about 16. And I'm like, "Oh, my God, I like this." But you know, I come from the 'hood, like, we didn't have money. I mean, every Christmas I was, I was praying and hoping for a computer. And you know, at that point, I'm like, a teenager. So turntables felt like a world far away from me.

However, there was just something about it that was like, I really like this. And so every time we had breakdancing practice, he'd let me like, play with a couple of records. But I really dove into it when I was in college studying jazz music, and I was looking for a job. And I was like, my mom linked me up with this club owner. And he was like, you know, what, if you open for me at night, you can come after school and practice. And so I started practicing with his rec. At that time, I haven't like I haven't even been to Germany or whatever. At that point, I was just, like, introduced to hip hop, and I was like, Okay, I like this and, you know, kind of feeling like I should I can I play these things, because, you know, I was still a gospel singer, I still can't just do whatever I want. But my mom was, you know, as she had faith, but she was, you know, the rebellious one in the family, and she always said, at the end of the day, you know, if your heart is feeling it, just just go for it, you know, this, you're not committing a crime. So I got into it, I'm studying jazz music. And then I entered this showcase in Quebec, which is kind of like American Idol, but for Quebec called L'Académie. And we we have this party at the house and they had done research about me and they were like, Oh, we hear that you DJ a little bit. So now I'm DJing in front of like, 2.5 million people, I have no clue (Sandy laughing) what I'm doing, what I'm like...

Hollywood Jade 24:59

No big deal!

Sandy Duperval 25:00

And that was the beginning of my love story with DJing, and I always feel like if it wasn't for my DJ career, I really, I had a really like, intense breakdown after the show. And the one thing, I didn't want to sing anymore! I was just like, you know what, now that I see what the industry is like, I'm just not gonna get into that I don't, I don't think I'm made for that. However, I started DJing at Unity in, in Montreal, like, it's funny, because I went from being in the crowd to like being behind the turntables. And I'm like, you know what? So for six years, I, six years from the moment I started playing at Unity, I didn't really focus on singing. And I remember it was a F1 event, and I had to spin in front of 40,000 people, and there was a mic there. And I thought to myself, yeah, DJing is cool, but 40,000 people are just like, staring at me, it's weird. So I took a mic, and I literally just wanted to shout out like, "Hey, what's up people" but the song that was playing as a song I loved so I just started singing. And I was like, wait a minute.

Hollywood Jade 26:21

I just got chills. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I literally just got chills thinking about that moment. Because if you have not experienced a Sandy Duperval set I'm sorry for you like I really am. Because it's literally it feels and it, listen to your story. It makes it make so much more sense. It literally feels like the Holy Spirit is shifting through this space. And I watched you command people and everybody falls into that trance. And if you've ever been in praise and worship, there's a moment where the Holy Spirit shows up and everybody locks in. And I watched you do this.

Sandy Duperval 26:59

Thank you so much. And in the funny thing it was a total, a beautiful accident, because I could not have prepared myself but what came after. For me it was really just like, Oh, you know what, let me entertain them a little bit. And then it was "the moment" that made Sandy Duperval who she is.

Hollywood Jade 27:19

Wow. Wow. (Sandy laughing)

Hollywood Jade 27:24

And again, we've been friends for a long time and I've never heard this story, (Sandy laughing) to show you how humble she is as a person, guys, like and that I think you're you're the beauty of your, your gift I think dwells in your humility.

Sandy Duperval 27:42

Thank you so much! Listen, um when I tell my story there's, there's a lot of parts I don't really tell, because a lot of my story, I guess it's, it's it's probably a lot of artists may relate to that, is ..it comes also with with traumas. I started singing, you know, really thinking I could stop the rain, but my mom had me when she was 15 and my dad was young. And so when I started singing, thinking I couldn't make the rain stop, I also thought that if I was special enough, they'd come back to get me from my grandma's because my mom, like my mom and my dad literally left me at my grandma's when I was one. So it felt like in that, at that time there was Star Search. And so I thought you know, maybe I'll be so good. I'll be on TV, and then they'll come back to get me.

Hollywood Jade 28:35

Wow.

Sandy Duperval 28:37

And it became this thing where I felt like it also tied up to this feeling of I needed to earn love. And in order to earn love, I had to be special. And in, in that, in itself was, been quite a trauma in my life, because love isn't something you earn. God made you, you are love! So for me, I had to learn that my gift is the way that I express myself, but it doesn't make me lovable. You are lovable first in what you do, in the choices you make can make you either an asshole or you know. But as a person, the minute you've taken your first breath, you deserve love. So for me, I've had to learn to, and that's, that might be why I'm so emotional when that when I sing, because it's still a place of like I want earn something

Hollywood Jade 29:46

Yeah, That you're still, you're part of me that's still so vulnerable.

Sandy Duperval 29:49

Yes! I'm still like, look, here's, perhaps I feel I've always felt like it's such a beautiful thing - I want people to see it, I want people to feel it. And at the same time, it was kind of like the the conflict I had with with singing. It, it went from being such a deep thing to being on TV and becoming a facade. And now it didn't work for me anymore. Because I was like, singing isn't something that I did, it's too serious for me to, to make it become political, or to make it become like some sort of game. When I sing, I mean it. So I think over time, it's developed into something different, but I'm still that vulnerable child.

Hollywood Jade 30:45

Yeah. Okay, so guys, remember at the beginning, when I said that she's, she's literally like words physicalized and turned into song, and that she's so poetic. This is why you're a great songwriter.

Sandy Duperval 30:59

Thank you.

Hollywood Jade 31:00

I'm making notes for you, and I'm just going to send all this stuff to you. Because there is there, there is there, is a song (Sandy laughing) and there's I'm literally writing notes, I'm like, there is a song and this message that you are delivering that the world needs, you know?! And if you decide you want to like write a song for me, for my birthday in January, I would be totally fine with that. (Hollywood Jade laughing)

Sandy Duperval 31:19

Listen you already heard songs that people have never heard, so you already know I'm always cooking up something. (Sandy laughing)

Hollywood Jade 31:27

Wow, that's good. Ah, man. Ooh! I think I think it's beautiful, even.. and this is something that I learned and I took from you, and I can say this to you, now once I started doing all this press stuff, this year for drag race, and people started becoming interested in me as an individual, not just as the choreographer from the show, but they're like waiting actually have a very dynamic and interesting story. And it always feels like they want me to tell them this terrible traumatic story, and I'm like, yeah, a lot of traumatic stuff happened, guys, but this also happened. And from that trauma, from this beautiful accident, I've been able to manifest and make all of these other things happen.

Sandy Duperval 32:14

Yeah.

Hollywood Jade 32:14

And I want to talk a little bit about something. And I hope that we can talk about this as about your health scare.

Sandy Duperval 32:21

Yeah, yeah.

Hollywood Jade 32:23

Yeah, the floor is yours.

Sandy Duperval 32:25

So in 2009, end of 2009, I was I was basically at a really great place in my career: I was traveling the world, I had been to Lebanon, and I was touring Germany, Lebanon, and I was heading to Morocco, when I started feeling a little sick, I had this quick sinus infection. I go to the emergency, just to see if this is something that would either leave or you know if I should take something. So I, they prescribed an antibiotic that is a sulfur based antibiotic called Septra. And so I take it for 10 days, and I'm in, I'm in Morocco at that point, I'm taking my antibiotic doing my shows. And on the day, I'm coming back home. I started getting, I started getting hives. And then I kind of felt

I was really tired. So I went to bed, woke up, went to the emergency and I was like, yeah, I'm getting rashes, I'm not feeling so well. So they thought I was having an allergic reaction. However, the hospital that I went to, it's a small hospital and they had no clue. So within the next 48 hours, I started getting ulcers in my mouth, all the way to my stomach, I started bubbling up like literally, like breath size, bubbles of infection coming, pouring out of like under my hair, on my lips, like my whole torso, my, my, my hands, my nails started to come up, come off. And at that point, my mom was a lawyer, so she pressured the hospital, she called people and we're Monday and they're telling my family that I may not make it through the night because the infection is just, it's spreading and if it gets to my spine, it'll, it'll go to my brain and that's it. And my mom pressured them to transfer me to another hospital. I get there, the dermatologist just looks at me, she's like she needs to go into surgery. And some paperwork drama happened and they didn't want to send me to surgery and the doctor had to take it upon herself to send me to surgery. And I remember the last image I have of myself is they're putting me into this kind of metal bath, and they had to induce me into a coma. So they took my skin off and they gave me this em, they call it immunoglobulin, I think, which is a synthetic immune system to kind of reset my system, put me into a coma for a couple of days. When I woke up, I didn't really because I was on, on like morphine, codeine, anything that you can think of, and so I'm not really aware of how bad it is. But I get out of my bed, and I see my face for the first time and the blood is pouring out, gushing out of my lips. And all I think I start crying. And I'm like, What happened? Basically, I had an allergic reaction that happens to one person out of 100,000. And the department that treated me is a department that I was a volunteer DJ for, raising money for five years, and the only department in Quebec who can treat my condition. So the volunteer work that I had done, and the money that was raised,

Hollywood Jade 36:15

Wow, wow!

Sandy Duperval 36:17

Saved my life. So some miracle happened, in a miracle that, that had been going on for years before I even had my reaction. And it's, this is where, you know, when they say, everything happens for a reason, and our lives are intertwined, and we're all connected. It's not a joke. And I know it may sound like, far fetched but ..

Hollywood Jade 36:48

No.

Sandy Duperval 36:49

Had I not been part of this, had there not been this foundation, raising money, firefighters raising money, that department, people with my condition died. Two years before me they were still dying, we were still struggling with the treatments. I had someone send me a message saying "I had the same thing as you and now I have kidney failure." And I'm safe and healthy. It took me six years to recover, but when you you know, I never realized how there's a saying in Creole, because I'm Haitian and it says "Pito ne le nu la", so "it's better if we're ugly but we're alive than beautiful and dead." (Sandy laughing) So, for me at that moment, I realized yeah, I had lost my nails, I had lost my hair, I had like my lips I couldn't even eat, they had to blend my food, like I had like this process where my food had to be put through a blender, I had to take this, I can't remember the name of it, but freeze my mouth, wait 20 minutes, then take a straw and drink my food. That's the first year. And because if I drink the food, within

that 20 minutes, I'm going to choke to death. And if I drank after an hour, I still have ulcers all the way to my stomach. So it was painful.

Hollywood Jade 38:27

Oh my gosh.

Sandy Duperval 38:29

So that that that in itself, it really changed me, it made me realize so much. (Sandy laughing)

Hollywood Jade 38:37

You just unpack a lot of things right there. And I think the first thing that I want to touch on really, really quickly is that your faith and your relationship with ..guys, I know we don't all believe in God for whatever purposes, but Sandy and I happen to be people of faith, who believe in God. And I just have to say that I believe that you're, the relationship that was established and built inside of you as a child, of those 18 years where you loved gospel music, and that relationship and that commitment to Him and honoring Him with your gift. (Sandy emotional) It speaks directly into your mother, honouring your gift and being like if it feels good inside your spirit, you should do it. Because if your mother suppressed that thing inside of you to be a DJ, you would have never been a DJ, you would have never been able to raise money for this department in Quebec. Your mother being a lawyer and being like, "hey, what you're not going to do is tell me she's done, what we're gonna do is we're going to transfer somewhere else where they can help her," and her being educated enough and and a lawyer I'm assuming, firm enough in her stance that they had no other choice but to do so. You getting there and somebody immediately.. that doctor could have been on vacation.

Sandy Duperval 39:59

Yeah!

Hollywood Jade 40:01

She could have just left.

Sandy Duperval 40:03

Or they could have been "we're swamped." You know, "we can't have her" you know, there's so many ways this could have gone wrong. And you know, the crazy thing is my mom and I, we didn't have a good relationship. My mom was bipolar, and it took, you know, and that's when we talk about mental health in the black community, when I say it's crucial that we open the conversation and we make safe space for people struggling with mental disorders. My mom, had she received the support and the help, her life would have been easy, and our relationship might have been better. But at the same time, no matter what happened in our lives, my mom showed up at, at times, where if she hadn't been there, I wouldn't be.

Hollywood Jade 40:50

Wow.

Sandy Duperval 40:51

So no matter how, like our relationship wasn't what I wanted it to be, she always showed up for me. And that is that that was the last time my mom showed up for me, before she passed away. (Sandy crying)

Hollywood Jade 41:07

Mm hmm.

Sandy Duperval 41:08

I'm so sorry.

Hollywood Jade 41:11

It's okay.

Sandy Duperval 41:15

And you know, you know, I had spent (crying) so many years angry, because I always felt like my parents had failed me. But I promise you, like, I may never understand how and why she was there. And I never, ever doubted that she loved me, and I never doubted that she was willing to make the sacrifices. And, you know, I got sick, and then she, she passed away on a trip to Haiti. And I remember feeling this, you know, now I'm in this position where I feel like I had failed her, because she saved my life, she showed up, even if it wasn't, every day, she showed up when she needed to be the mother, and now I had, I I spent years struggling with the fact that she died, and I never made peace with her. But I don't doubt and I remembered her last phone call when she was on her deathbed, is to tell me that she loves me. And I didn't want to say it back, because I felt like if I did, then that was the end. But I hope she knows I did love her. (crying)

Hollywood Jade 42:49

Um,

Sandy Duperval 42:50

I have to call my therapist...(laughing)

Hollywood Jade 42:53

It's, it's fine. And I, I relate to that sentiment of regret. I relate to that sentiment of hoping and wishing and praying and I'm telling you, I don't know your mom personally, but I see her show up in you, the way you show up for people.

Sandy Duperval 43:20

Thank you. (Emotional)

Hollywood Jade 43:23

There's never been a time where I have asked you to do something for me. There's, I've watched you wake up and leave Toronto, drive to Montreal, to do an interview, to drive back to Toronto, so that you can be in class, because you have a group assignment. Like, all in one day.

Sandy Duperval 43:46

Yeah, I'm, I'm committed. (laughing)

Hollywood Jade 43:48

That's your mother. That's, that, that's the same fight that she had. It was like, No, I refuse. And yeah, that's her showing up in you.

Sandy Duperval 43:59

Definitely.

Hollywood Jade 43:59

She knows. She knows.

Sandy Duperval 44:02

I ..Seriously, and you know, in my household saying "I love you" was taboo. I think the first time my grandmother said, "I love you." I didn't know what to do with myself, I was like "Are you dying? Is everything okay?" (Hollywood Jade laughing) So, but there is not a doubt in my, in my mind, in my heart that we loved each other. And I really hope I see it, you know, my sister just had a baby, I see that the relationships are different, you know, generation to generation. Thankfully, our, even our parents are opening up in ways that their parents didn't open up. Um, and even as a queer woman of colour, I find myself now feeling like my generation or even the generation, my mom's generation is finally opening up and there are more safe spaces. You can actually be at the table and people are not just talking behind your back where they're asking you, "how are you? How's your girlfriend?" you know, like, "How's your fiance?" now we can have some sort of, of..

Hollywood Jade 45:14

Dialogue.

Sandy Duperval 45:15

Dialogue that isn't surface. And I think and that's why I have so much hope in people and I'm always trying to show up because we can all grow together, you know?!

Hollywood Jade 45:26

Yeah, it's it's, it's, it's to your point like it is, it is bad, guys, there's a lot of bad in the world, there really is. But I, I just choreographed this music video where literally 80% of the cast were queer people of colour.

Sandy Duperval 45:43

That's amazing.

Hollywood Jade 45:44

Like, I'm like, we exist in a world. And in my lifetime, where I use that, at 17 and 18, I used to be afraid to walk down Yonge Street Caribana weekend on a Friday night.

Sandy Duperval 45:57

Yeah (laughing)

Hollywood Jade 45:57

Now, the Pride Parade rolls down Yonge Street.

Sandy Duperval 46:03

I, we've come a long way. And, we've always come a long way so quickly, because we, civil rights, I mean, the first Civil Rights Act was in 1866. But then it took another hundred years to actually have equality, on, on, on, not just paper, but practice. But look at how far we've come from cotton fields

Hollywood Jade 46:29

To ..listen, I said, I said, my sister and my nephew, not my sister, sorry, my niece and one of my nephews live in a world where there has always been a black president.

Sandy Duperval 46:40

Right?! Like, listen, if they had said that, to me, 20 years ago, I would have been like, "Yo, are you okay?"

Hollywood Jade 46:47

I'm like, "What are you talking about?" Ain't about to let go like, seriously. And and, and I and, I agree with you. I think it's so important for us to and I think that's why our spirits saw each other. And before we even like, spoke, I felt our spirits Connect. And they've been dancing and singing with each other since then. Because we have very similar views of the world in which it's like, Yeah, this terrible thing is happening over here. But guys, there's also this great thing that's happening over here. Like you said, a beautiful accident.

Sandy Duperval 47:21

Yeah. And and, and that's why whenever things get really bad, I think to myself, of all the times that I thought, Oh, it's over, it's too bad. It's too bad. I can't get through this. And I'm like, Oh, that's just another lesson, let's just, let me take all the tools out of this so that I'm ready for my next stage. Until your last breath, the music doesn't stop, life doesn't stop. So don't just stop, don't just give up, you.. just take the tools. I find that observing has helped me a lot through all of you know, this pandemic. I'm taking in, yes, the bad news, but I'm also taking in how amazing it will feel once we overcome that stage, and all the ways will be perhaps I hope better to one another.

Hollywood Jade 48:15

I think I, not think sorry, the pandemic and this worldwide pandemic, and the state of the world in the United States, and the wars that are breaking out, what this has done, guys, is it is held a mirror up to us and we now can't act like we don't see it. The amount of activism that is surrounding Black Lives Matter and all of this stuff, this is this is what it did. It's held this mirror up. So yes, it's negative, and it's bad, and it's terrible, and it's awful. It's not a coincidence that in alignment with Black Lives Matter, we happen to be in a pandemic where you have nothing, you can't go to work, all you can do is sit here and look at the state of the world.

Sandy Duperval 48:58

Mm hmm. You can't, you can't, you can't hide under a rock. You can't pretend none of this is happening. We have to face these challenges. And I hope that you know, I think one of the things that I'm doing right now is taking in even the emotions even when I don't feel so positive, and really looking deep into myself and understanding there's very little choices I have. So now the choices I have, I try to make better ones. I try to reflect on the things I took for granted. I mean, how did I know we would be on lockdown, Hollywood I would have seen you every day. (laughing)

Hollywood Jade 49:40

Every day! We would have, we would have stocked up our bank!

Sandy Duperval 49:43

Right! Right! So now I'm like you know what take in, take in all the ways that life has changed so that when you get the opportunity, you embrace it.

Hollywood Jade 49:54

Ah yes! And listening to you talk about opportunities and embrace and change and all of these things I'm reminded of yet again, another accomplishment on your many list of accomplishments. And, and you being a singer who was trained by Whitney Houston's mother, touring the world DJing singing, refining this passion, on top of doing all of these other things, you're like, you know what, let's just add another skill set. (Sandy laughing) And then you said, I'mma "just go and study to become a culinary chef.

Sandy Duperval 50:32

Yeah. So my grandma was a chef. You know, when my mom passed away, it was really hard for her, and then she got she got diagnosed with cancer. And we had a dream, my mom had a restaurant when she was younger. And my grandma and I, we said, we would try to open the restaurant again. And unfortunately, she passed away, but she made me promise that I would try to do something with it. And I felt like, Okay, I have no background, right, besides my cooking with my grandma. So I went back to school, which, which is kind of hard, because I had students being like, "oh, you're the same age as my mom." And I'm, like, "shut up!" (laughing). So for me, it was challenging, because now is like, oh man, I'm this like, older student, but truth is there shouldn't be an age to learn, like, there's no limit to, to your brain. So just, you know, it was challenging, I had to set my pride aside. But it gave me tools that I even like, put into my music. Now, the way that school has made me just expand my horizon, in becoming a chef was just like, another art form. So I get to be in the kitchen, I get to create things that remind me of home, and I get to like, listen to music that just makes me feel like I am living my best life. Everything that I'm doing, no matter how hard it got, is everything that makes my heartbeat it makes every heartbeat worth the race, you know, like so in the end. You know, I'm doing my bachelor's degree when, when the pandemic started, I had already done my college degree. And I was like, Oh, you know what, let's just...

Hollywood Jade 52:23

Som you've already got one level that most people would be fine with, but you're like, that's not enough. (Sandy laughing)

Sandy Duperval 52:29

I was like, but you know what, I was getting bored. I decided, you know, let me just do my bachelor's degree. And now you know, the pandemic is keeping me away from a dance floor, like, I can't, I don't DJ as much and I don't get as many contracts. But I'm still as busy. I have time now to make more music, and I'm in school. So now I just finished my midterm, have a week off, so I can like create. But it, I think that's the essence of life. Give your heart a reason to beat, no matter how hard it is, you know?! Like, so being in school, yeah, sometimes I find it challenging, I would rather be making money. (laughing) But I get, I get knowledge, education is wealth. (laughing) You can't put that into dollar signs, it really is something that will enable you and make, make you see how amazing you can be.

Hollywood Jade 53:30

Sandy, you simply are one of the most inspiring people that I am privileged and humbled enough to call friend.

Sandy Duperval 53:42

Thank you so much!

Hollywood Jade 53:43

You are my sister in more than one struggle, being Black, being queer. And sometimes I feel like a woman (laughter)

Hollywood Jade 53:51

(Sandy laughing) Me and you, honey!

Hollywood Jade 53:51

(laughing) So but like I, I, I take my hat off to you. And I applaud you, because you, you light up a room in more ways than one. And you are literally an event coordinator's like dream, you could do the food, you could do the DJ, and you could be the enter- oh, come on, you are an event coordinator's dream.

Sandy Duperval 53:56

But that was the whole point, that was really like, you know what, I can make a package and experience you just don't just get music, you get the food that pairs well like great wine, you know?!

Hollywood Jade 54:30

See, and this is why she's always involved in the things that I do guys. (Sandy laughing) She's, she's also a sound, man, you need something built, you can also build that, like, the hour wasn't enough time to really go into all of the things that you do, but..

Sandy Duperval 54:45

I'm living my best life. You know, whenever people say, "Oh, you're not that great at this. You shouldn't do that." I'm like, yeah, that's exactly where I'm going. (laughing)

Hollywood Jade 54:55

I love it. So dynamic, passionate, talented, and hard - I don't know if I can swear, it's mine, I'm gonna bleep it out later - hard fucking working are just some of the words that describes the artist that is Sandy Duperval. If you could leave us with one thing..

Sandy Duperval 55:19

So many thing now I'm like....(sigh)

Hollywood Jade 55:20

I know.

Sandy Duperval 55:24

You know what,

Hollywood Jade 55:25

I can make it easier.

Sandy Duperval 55:26

Okay!

Hollywood Jade 55:27

Okay, if you were it's raining thunderstorms outside, what song would you go outside and sing to clear the skies now?

Sandy Duperval 55:39

Amazing grace...Amazing grace.

Hollywood Jade 55:45

I'm, I'm waiting.

Sandy Duperval 55:46

Oh you want me to do? (laughing)

Hollywood Jade 55:48

I don't know what you thought

Sandy Duperval 55:51

Let me, let me just (clears float.) I haven't been singing in a long time but

Hollywood Jade 55:57

That's okay.

Sandy Duperval 55:58

Let just do this for you

Hollywood Jade 55:59

And she's sitting down, she didn't have a warm up, guys..

Sandy Duperval 56:03

Ain't got no water. Okay,

Hollywood Jade 56:05

Stop it, it's good.

Sandy Duperval 56:13

(singing)

Amazing Grace

How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost

But now I'm found

Was blind, but now I see

Hollywood Jade 57:09

Sun has come out, the clouds have parted, and all is right in the land.

Sandy Duperval 57:15

Yay. Thank you. (laughing)

Hollywood Jade 57:17

Thank you so much, Sandy for being here. I appreciate you more than you know, my soul honours your soul. And I just want to continue, I just want to encourage you to continue to exalt yourself into excellence, because that is what you are.

Sandy Duperval 57:31

Thank you so much. Thank you for everything that you do. And Pride Toronto, thank you for standing up for those who don't have a voice who were failed by the system and making these platforms available to us. And please continue, continue because we need those safe spaces, and we need to tell the kids that are dreaming about freedom that it is possible.

Hollywood Jade 58:05

I'm done, I'm bothered, and I am completely satisfied, Sandy, have an amazing day! And one last thing actually quickly, what is next? what's new for you? I know that you are the ambassador for, you were the ambassador for the first ever talk about your ambassadorship?

Sandy Duperval 58:29

Yeah. Pride Montreal, Canada Pride, officially Pride Montreal. I think the next thing for me is just releasing more music. I just finished one song now, and I was like, let me send it to Hollywood. So I think it's really everything that I've gone through all my experiences, I have finally found who I wanted to be as an artist. And it takes time for a lot of us. For some of us it's easy, for a lot of us, it takes those experiences. So my struggles were worth it because now I know who I am and I have something to share that I really hope that people can, can connect with.

Hollywood Jade 59:24

I connect with you. I love it. Thank you, Sandy! Again, I appreciate you, I am so grateful for you, and just continue to honour your gifts and be Black, Queer and Trans and Excellence all at the same time.

Sandy Duperval 59:39

Yees, honey!

Hollywood Jade 59:41

Have a good day. Thank you so much for being here.

Sandy Duperval 59:44

You, too! (laughing)

Hollywood Jade 59:44

Bye bye.