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ENTERTAINMENT

Meet Chappell Roan's makeup artist, the Greater Cincinnati designing her viral looks

 **Grace Tucker**
Cincinnati Enquirer

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Chappell Roan talks about her Midwest upbringing

During an October show in Milwaukee, singer Chappell Roan told fans of her experience growing up in Missouri before performing her song Kaleidoscope.

Andrew Dahling used to secretly apply his mom's makeup when he was 8 years old living in [Hebron, Kentucky](#).

Now, he's garnered viral success as the makeup artist for [Chappell Roan](#), the pop princess turned MTV Video Music Award-nominee who has risen to gargantuan fame.

Roan first reached mainstream popularity as the opener for [Olivia Rodrigo's Guts World Tour](#). She's since emerged as a chart-topping "queer pop superstar" characterized by her drag queen aesthetic that is largely rooted in – you guessed it – makeup.

In June, Dahling designed the star's makeup for her Governor's Ball set in New York City. The performance dominated social media posts and [Rolling Stone headlines](#) alike, with shots of Roan painted head-to-toe green as the Statue of Liberty, an endeavor Dahling says took around five hours to complete.



Andrew Dahling at the MAC Viva Glam Billion Dollar Ball in June. Dahling designs Chappell Roan's makeup. Steven Ferdman, Getty Images



Andrew Dahling designed Chappell Roan's makeup for her Governor's Ball set in New York City in June. Cheney Orr, Reuters

Rolling Stone's [video](#) of her Governor's Ball entrance alone racked up well over 8 million views on TikTok. The look, pieced together by Dahling's makeup and styling from wardrobe extraordinaire [Genesis Webb](#), effectively cemented Roan's status as, in the [words of Vogue](#), a "pop superstar in the making."

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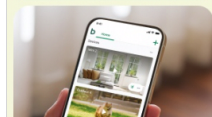
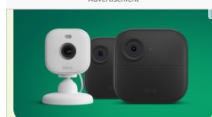
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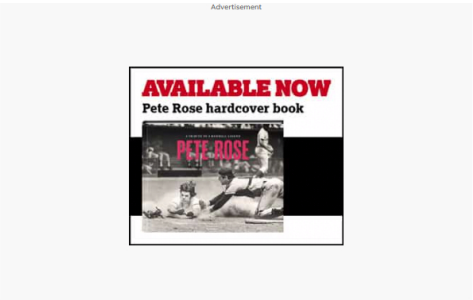
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'There's a lot more eyes on me now'

Dahling spent seven years working as a makeup artist in New York City, creating looks for editorial campaigns and runways at New York Fashion Week. He worked with the likes of V Magazine and Vogue and artists that include [Adam Lambert](#). But this moment with Roan feels different, he said.

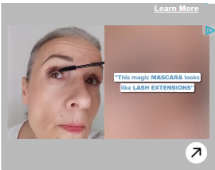
The public's reception of her striking Governor's Ball look was his "first real taste of a major moment that people are really paying attention to," he said.



Chappell Roan performs at the Governor's Ball in June. *Cheney Orr, Reuters*

"There's a lot more eyes on me now."

Dahling has since designed several looks for Roan, including her [Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival](#) set in June and her sprawling [Rolling Stone](#) cover shoot released Wednesday.



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'We're all a bunch of misfits from the middle of nowhere'

Dahling said fate dictated his and Roan's paths crossing. It was also dictated by his Kentucky roots.

A friend from Conner High School helped introduce Dahling to Webb, Roan's stylist, while on set for a photoshoot in New York City. A couple conversations later, and Dahling was booked to do the Governor's Ball makeup for Roan, who has shaped her brand around her [Missouri roots](#) and being a "Midwest Princess."

"We're all a bunch of misfits from the middle of nowhere with a crazy vision and crazy dream and so much talent," Dahling said of Roan and her team.

"I love working with Chappell because she's so down for anything ... she's not super picky, she's not afraid to get messy. She's not a celebrity that has to work a specific way," he explained.

Though he's built a career miles away from the Bluegrass State, Dahling said he's proud to maintain Kentuckian hospitality in a cutting-edge industry.



Andrew Dahling at the MAC Viva Glam Billion Dollar Ball in June. Steven Ferdman, Getty Images

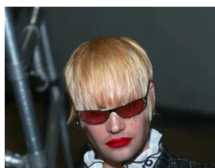
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"I love where I grew up just because of how warm, welcoming, generous, compassionate everyone was. (It's the) type of feeling that anyone would give you the shirt off their backs," Dahling said.

"When you move to New York, you come across a lot of very stark, very cold characters especially in the makeup and fashion industry. It's almost like a form of currency how big of a b----- you can be," he explained. "I love that I get to enter these spaces and bring some of that loving compassion and warmth from Kentucky into those spaces."

He's grateful for his upbringing, but growing up as part of the LGBTQ+ community in Northern Kentucky was also challenging at times, he said.

"We are all products of our environment and we don't get to



choose where we're born," Danning said. "(Some people are) happy with what they've been dealt, happy with the beautiful all-American lifestyle ... (but) for someone like me and a lot of queer people, places like Cincinnati, Ohio, and all those Midwestern states, you look around and you don't see anyone who you can relate to."



Andrew Dahling attends the Wiederhoeft Fashion Show during New York Fashion Week in 2023. Manny Carabel, Getty Images

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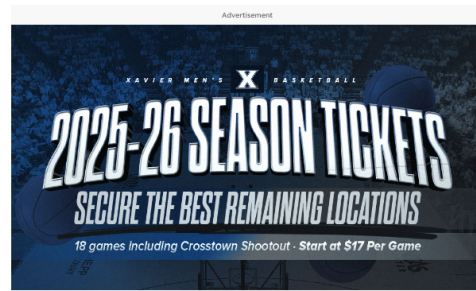
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Dahling was 23 years old when he moved to New York and began establishing his career as a makeup artist. Before then, he developed his makeup skills purely on his own.

Growing up in Northern Kentucky

Dahling remembers his Kentucky childhood being painted in technicolor by images of Beyoncé, Britney Spears and other pop stars he watched on his family's TV.



He describes his family as being "beautiful, wonderful people," but said they had no part in helping him discover the "worlds" of beauty, fashion and makeup.

"For a while, (makeup) was the only thing that made sense to me. I always loved to sing and perform, but I didn't have an outlet for that ... at least in NKY there was still some sort of outlet for makeup and I knew I was good at it," he said.

In high school, he spent hours at a time studying the makeup skills of YouTubers, such as Nikkie de Jager-Drossaers (NikkieTutorials). He practiced his skills on friends, doing their makeup for school dances and football games. He remembers a specific time he filled in his eyebrows with makeup for school before getting scared and wiping them off.

Looking back now, he wishes he simply trusted that young, artistic intuition more.

"Just because you don't see anybody doing anything close to what you want for yourself ... doesn't mean anything," Dahling would tell his high school self.



Andrew Dahling winning Homecoming King at Conner High School. Provided By Andrew Dahling



"You are destined for all those fantasies you have in your head. Trust Lady Gaga videos, tune into that more."

His journey came full circle

After nailing Roan's Governor's Ball makeup, Dahling came strikingly full circle when he designed the star's look for her [Kentuckiana Pride Festival performance](#) in Louisville in June.

She, of course, showed up to the show with a [special look](#): an homage to

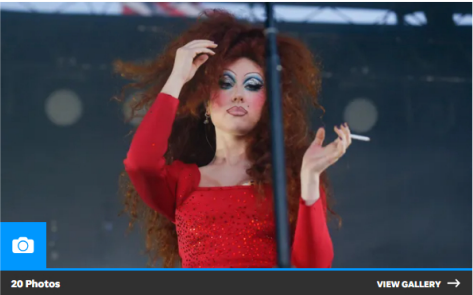
Divine, the late famous drag queen, and the classic film "Pink Flamingos."



Chappell Roan paid homage to Divine, the late famous drag queen, during her Kentuckiana Pride Festival performance in June. Scott Utterback/Courier Journal

The makeup, featuring high, thin eyebrows, overlined lips and blue eyeshadow, gave Dahling another shot at generating buzz for the rising pop star and nailing her creative vision.

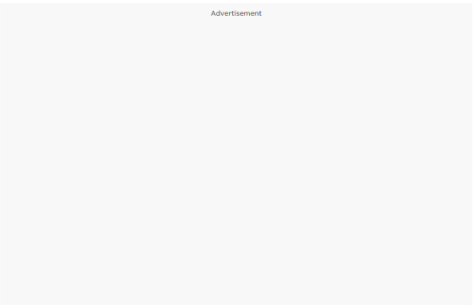
"As a stylist or designer, you can see what the makeup is supposed to look like, but I'm the one who needs to bring it to life," Dahling said.



PHOTOS: Chappell Roan performs at Kentuckiana Pride Festival in Louisville
Chappell Roan, a glittery Midwestern pop star who loves to dress up, sing and dance, performed at the 2024 Kentuckiana Pride Festival in Louisville.


Ultimately, Roan's Louisville performance did, indeed, support her explosive rise to fame, drawing attention in [national](#) and [local headlines](#) alike. The entire experience, being back in his home state while working at his dream gig, almost seemed like a work of fate, Dahling said.

"It was crazy being back in Kentucky ... out of all places that (Chappell) could've gone," he said. "It felt like a little wink from the universe, like a little reminder."




"There are moments in your path where you realize ... everything was meant to be the way that it was."







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