Drag Race UK’s Cherry Valentine felt ‘privileged’ to work as a nurse and help save lives through the pandemic

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Cherry Valentine is one of the 12 queens of Drag Race UK season two. (BBC)

Drag Race UK queen Cherry Valentine has opened up about working as a nurse through the pandemic. Despite the protestations of some, drag queens are not essential workers – unless they happen to be Cherry Valentine, that is.

Debuting on Drag Race UK season two ought to have been the most stressful part of any queen’s year, but for Cherry, it was far from it.

That’s because she’s a qualified mental health nurse who has been working through the pandemic.

“I’d be lying if I said it was fun,” Cherry told PinkNews and other outlets at a recent Q&A.

“It was madness, absolute madness, but I just feel so privileged to have been able to help however I can.”

Cherry began filming season two of Drag Race UK at the start of 2020, before the pandemic truly revealed itself. But as the virus began to run rampant, and the UK was forced to lock down, production halted and the queens were sent back to reality for about five months.

In January, shortly after the queens were unveiled, Cherry confirmed that she had returned to her day job after trolls told her she should be “ashamed” of doing drag instead of nursing.

“The thing is, I am,” she tweeted at the time. “I just don’t feel the need to broadcast it 24/7.”

In a separate tweet, she added: “Yes, I am a nurse and I love it, and I will continue to work, as anyone in my position would as and when I can. But I will never apologise for chasing my dreams. Never.”

Cherry said that even when nursing, drag remained a lifeline for her.

“Art is a lifeline, I think that goes for a lot of us,” she said.

“I would come home from a crazy shift, slap a face on and feel my fantasy and pick that back up, so it really has helped.”

Cherry Valentine on meeting RuPaul.

Turning to lighter conversation, Cherry discussed what it was like meeting RuPaul – or rather, not meeting RuPaul.

“I didn’t really meet her, was it a hologram?” she joked.

“I have no idea. To be honest it feels like a lucid dream, I don’t actually eel like I was there – but I was there.”

She laughed: “RuPaul is just as photoshopped and facetuned in real life.”

Recently, the Drag Race UK judges opened up about the major differences between this year’s cast and the season one queens.