

Who do you think you are?
A game about fame and identity (and the Spice Girls)
by Kat Jones

*The race is on to get out of the bottom
The top is high so your roots are forgotten
Giving is good as long as you're getting
What's driving you is ambition I'm betting*
-Spice Girls "Who Do You Think You Are?"

This is a game for 3-7 players and 1 facilitator.

Each player takes on the role of the member of a girl group recruited by a management team. The group was incredibly successful for a short time. They appeared in numerous commercials, made public appearances, and even produced a movie that has an amazing cult following. But when one of the members decided to leave the group things no longer worked. The group produced one final album and then went their separate ways. The group is still viewed as a cultural icon and members are often asked about a potential reunion tour.

Each character in the group is a combination of their Persona, their role in the group along with their public personality and appearance, and their Backstage Self, the person they are outside of the group and before the group was formed. The players begin by constructing their public Persona, and then play out four scenes that move through the group's history. Between these scenes players reveal more about their character's Backstage Self and life behind the scenes in Interludes.

Creating the Personnas

Each player selects one of the following personnas:

1. The Sporty One
2. The Sexy One
3. The Cute/Sweet One
4. The Scary One
5. The Fancy One
6. The Serious One
7. The Funny One

Write your persona on the top of a piece of paper. Pass the paper to the player sitting next to you, they will determine one aspect of this Persona. This can be appearance, personality, signature dance move, or other public aspects of the character as part of the group. Pass the paper around until each other player has written down an aspect. Pay attention to the other aspects and try to craft a unified Persona for each character. Once the paper has returned to the player they have the option to add or subtract one aspect of their Persona.

Now that you have a persona, each Character needs to develop a Pose. Put on some Spice Girls songs (or another girl group of your choice) and move as your Character's Persona. Think of a pose that communicates your character's Persona clearly to an audience.

Scene 1: The Commercial

Role of the Facilitator: Director

Suggested Song: Spice Up Your Life

The group is filming a commercial for a popular store. The premise is that the band is planning a party, but each member has very different ideas about what food should be served, what activities to do, and what party favors to provide the guests. The message of the commercial is that the store can accommodate a variety of interests and make everyone happy.

The character's should all play their personas in a very flat, two dimensional way. The facilitator will act as the director and encourage each character to play up their persona in their dialogue and physicality. The director should make the characters play through the commercial several times, making it feel a bit tedious. The commercial should end with each character doing their Persona's pose.

Interlude 1: Creating the Backstage Self

Suggested Song: Spice Up Your Life

- Flip over your piece of paper. Now you will now begin creating your Backstage Self. Your character's Backstage Self will eventually have five aspects. Three of these aspects should somehow contradict your character's Persona. These aspects should be more private aspects of your character: hobbies, passions, experiences. Don't worry if some of these aspects seem to contradict each other, your character's Backstage Self should feel complex and messy, as opposed to the carefully constructed Persona your character takes on in public.
- In Interlude 1 players should generate the three aspects of their character's Backstage self that contradict their character's Persona. The facilitator should tell the players what scene they will be playing next and help that guide the creation of the three aspects.
- Listen to the song and think about who your character was before they joined the group, who are they when they are not on stage or performing as their persona. What contradictions will be interesting for you to play? What aspects of their Backstage Self make it challenging for this character to maintain their Persona?

Scene 2: The Interview

Role of the Facilitator: Interviewer

The group is being interviewed at the height of their popularity. Their management team wants them to highlight their close relationship, girl power, and the new movie that they are currently filming. The Interviewer is hoping for a juicy story. The players should play the interview as their Personas, but with the knowledge of the Backstage Self they've been creating. Band members should work to keep each other “in Persona” and on message. If a group member deviates by revealing something too personal or too controversial the other members of the group should laugh it off, change topic, or send a subtle reminder to fall in line. The facilitator as the Interviewer should attempt to reveal the Backstage Selves behind the Personas, look for conflicts among group members, and get the members to speak as individuals, rather than as members of the group.

Interlude 2: Finalizing the Backstage Self

Suggested Song: Who Do You Think You Are?

- The facilitator should tell the players what scene they will be playing next and help that guide the creation of the rest of the Backstage Self.
- Give your Backstage Self a name. Now give your Backstage Self the final two aspects. These aspects should be more private aspects of your character: hobbies, passions, experiences. Don't worry if some of these aspects seem to contradict each other, your character's Backstage Self should feel complex and messy, as opposed to the carefully constructed Persona your character takes on in public.
- Listen to the song and think about who your character was before they joined the group, who are they when they are not on stage or performing as their persona. What aspects of the Backstage Self have did they reveal in the interview? What other aspects would make this character complex and interesting to play?

Scene 3: Planning for the Future

Role of the Facilitator: Call for monologues

Suggested Song: Wannabe

- This scene takes place before the group has been formally created and before the characters have been assigned their public Personas. This scene should be played as the character's Backstage Selves.

- The management team that auditioned the characters has delayed providing the group a formal contract, currently the characters are all unhappy with the management's handling of their group and are considering touring other management agencies to see if they can get a better contract and more creative control. In order to increase their bargaining power the characters have decided to break into the management office and steal the master recordings of the songs they've recorded so far. They've successfully pulled off the theft and now have met back at their flat to plan their next steps.
- During the scene the facilitator should pause play and call for monologues from different characters. Give them prompts to discuss their feelings, hopes, and worries about the future. Ask them questions about what they did during the heist. How did they help, what skills from their Backstage Self did they draw on, what did they learn about themselves or other characters during this experience?

Interlude 3: Relationships

Suggested Song: Wannabe

- In this interlude the facilitator will help the players build relationships between their characters. Based on the interaction from the past three scenes the facilitator should propose a close relationship between at least two of the characters (with 3 or 4 players) or two close relationships (for 5 - 7 players). The players should then determine the nature of this close relationship: is it based on artistic similarity, life experience, personality, etc. Is the bond platonic, romantic, or sisterly? The facilitator should throw out suggestions if the players seem stuck, but ultimately the players should determine the relationship between the characters and the players in the relationship should have the final say. Make sure they are excited about the relationship they have created.
- Based on the interaction from the past three scenes the facilitator should propose a conflicted relationship between at least two of the characters (with 3 or 4 players) and two conflicted relationships (for 5 or 6 players). The players should then determine the nature of this conflicted relationship: is it based on artistic differences, personality clashes, envy, etc. Does the conflict manifest as fighting, backhanded compliments, or is it more of an internal conflict? The facilitator should throw out suggestions if the players seem stuck, but ultimately the players should determine the relationship between the characters and the players in the relationship should have the final say. Make sure they are excited about the relationship they have created.

- Finally, the facilitator should help the players decide which character is going to leave the group. The group will record one final album without this band member, but then they will break up the group. Think about the story you want to tell: do you want the decision to come as a shock, or did everyone see it coming? What tensions are already visible from the scenes you've played? Think about the relationships you've just established between characters, how will they be impacted by one of the group members leaving? Again the facilitator should make suggestions, but ultimately let the players decide. Feel free to set a time limit on the decision if it seems like it's taking too long. The facilitator should also feel free to ammend this section if the players can't decide and it makes more sense for the band to completely break up, rather than having one member leave. The players should all be excited about the decision, whatever it is.

Scene 4: The Heist

Role of the Facilitator: Time Keeper

Now players will go back in time and play the decision and planning for the heist they had successfully completed in Scene 3. This scene takes place before the group has been formally created and before the characters have been assigned their public Personas. This scene should be played as the character's Backstage Selves. In order to increase their bargaining power the characters have decided to break into the management office and steal the master recordings of the songs they've recorded so far. Use this scene to demonstrate the characters' Backstage selves and begin to foreshadow their relationships. This is one of the first activities they've done together as a group that was not mandated or scheduled by management. How is their dynamic different from earlier scenes? While conflicts may arise in this scene, ultimately the atmosphere should be one of excitement and energy as the group members learn how to work together and support each other.

Interlude 4: Moving On

Suggested Song: Viva Forever

- The facilitator should inform players that they are heading into the final scene of the game. This will be an interview that is being conducted 10 years after the group has split up.
- Have the players look at their character sheets. They can choose two aspects of their Backstage Self that have changed in the past ten years.
- They should also choose one project they are involved in that they are very passionate about:

this can be another creative project or it could be something completely different. All the characters should be doing something that they find personally satisfying, even if it isn't something particularly exciting or in the public eye. Let the aspects of the character's Backstage Self be a guide, but the facilitator should remind players that they are free to take their characters in a radically different direction if that is what would be fun to play.

- Finally, revisit the relationships you created between the characters. How have they changed? Stayed the same? Are there any new connections that have been formed? Any new conflicts that have arisen?

Scene 4: 10 years later

Role of the Facilitator: Interviewer

Suggested Song: Goodbye

The group is being interviewed ten years after the group split up. The group members have gone their separate ways, though some may have maintained friendships with each other. Each member has their own new projects and life that they've built separate from the group. The facilitator as the Interviewer should push for information about a reunion tour, revisit past memories, and refer to the character's Personas. In this interview, the members should support each other in demonstrating their Backstage Selves. They should feel free to be candid and open about their experiences in the group including any frustrations they may have had with the management team, their Persona, or even their fellow band members (though this should not be done with anger or nastiness, but rather as something past that is being re-examined).

A Note on Music:

This game was heavily inspired by the Spice Girls. Feel free to incorporate their music into the game in various ways. Some folks, like me, love having music on in the background and find it inspiring and useful for setting tone and creating a certain vibe or energy for a scene. Some folks hate this and view listening to music as an activity that should be done with no interruptions. As the facilitator check in with your players and see what they prefer. Some scenes and interludes have suggested songs that give an indication of the mood and tone, these can be played at the beginning, ending, or during play. If your players are familiar with the Spice Girl's music encourage them to incorporate these songs into the scenes—singing bits of the tune, quoting lyrics. But they shouldn't feel pressured if their knowledge of the Spice Girls is limited. The game should provide enough information that even players who have never heard of the Spice Girls can still enjoy the game.