

Montreal Just for Laughs/10 Comics to Watch 2010

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10 Comics to Watch: Chelsea Peretti

She's the writer everyone wants to work with

By DENNIS HENSLEY

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Chelsea Peretti

One of the biggest turning points in Chelsea Peretti's comedy career came during a blackout. "Not an alcoholic blackout," stresses the Oakland-born Barnard grad, who is a regular on TruTV's "The Smoking Gun Presents," "a literal blackout. Someone had given me a Bill Hicks comedy CD, and I listened to it during a blackout in Brooklyn, and I remember thinking, 'I can talk about stuff that I really care about.'?"

Like her love life, for example. Her cult hit web series "All My Exes" featured Peretti doing hard-hitting newsmag-style interviews with her exes, played by such stand-ins as Pras Michel from The Fugees and Fred Armisen from "Saturday Night Live."

"In one episode, the guy gives me a painting of myself, and the painting we used was from a real ex-boyfriend," says Peretti, whose comedy style might be described as two parts sarcastic, one part silly. "I told him I used it, but he didn't comment. I guess he didn't think it was hilarious."

Peretti seems to be doing fine without him. She hosted Axe's Twisted Humor Tour for Funny or Die last spring. And Sarah Silverman, who did a guest set on "Variety Shac," the four-girl stage show-turned-TV pilot Peretti co-created at the Upright Citizens Brigade, was so impressed she offered Peretti a writing job on "The Sarah Silverman Program."

"That was probably the first time anyone I really looked up to was like, 'You're great,?'" recalls Peretti. "I was very moved by that. I felt like, 'OK, even if audiences hate me, I'm going to keep going.'?"

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"When I have a really bad show, I think, 'I have no talent. What am I doing? I should move to a mountain community and be a florist,' but I'm sure that's completely cut-throat, too."

Influences: Joan Rivers, Larry David, Tina Fey.

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