

A Comedian for Everyone: Q&A with Fortune Feimster - Nightlife

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ARTISTS & INTERVIEWS

A Comedian for Everyone: Q&A with Fortune Feimster

SUZANNE KOCH, APRIL 16, 2018

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You may have first laughed at Fortune Feimster in 2010 during her time on *Last Comic Standing* but today, she's making us laugh in a lot more ways. From writing and producing, to acting and stand up comedy, Fortune Feimster has found herself in the comedic spotlight, appealing to a wide audience. After breaking out on *Chelsea Lately* as a writer and performer she starred in *The Mindy Project* and currently appears as Ruby on *Champions*, among countless other projects.

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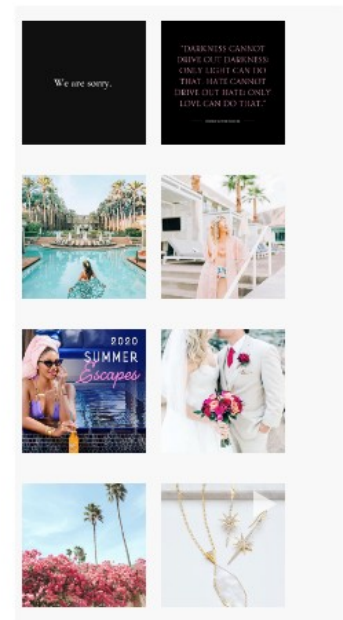
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We had a chance to chat with Fortune on what it takes to prevail in the world of comedy, the people who can make her laugh and what it's like working with people like Tina Fey and Chelsea Handler.

Catch Fortune live at House of Comedy April 20-21. For tickets and more information, visit: az.houseofcomedy.net



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AFM: I've heard the world of stand up comedy can be pretty brutal in the beginning. How were your first few shows?

Fortune Feimster: The hardest part about stand up comedy is having enough material to fill the time because when you first start out you're only doing 3-5 minute sets and then when you headline you have to do 45 minutes to an hour. So while it seems when you're watching stand up comedy that everything kind of comes naturally and that the jokes freely flow, it takes forever to build up that material and really make it work. I think in the beginning you're just struggling to find your voice. But I've definitely had some shows early on where I wasn't sure how I was going to fill out that whole time but luckily I come from improv so I was able to talk to the audience a lot. Any time I didn't have a lot of material I would ask questions of the audience and have a lot of back-and-forth which is something I still do because I enjoy talking to my audiences.

AFM: What would you say is something about the world of comedy that people may not know?

FF: I think anytime you see anyone on stage performing you just kind of think that everything is very glamorous and that life is some big party. But when you're a road comic and you're on the road every weekend it's pretty exhausting. You'll do shows for these big audiences and have a great time and meet everybody, but then you go back to your hotel room and it's usually just you and you're watching Netflix and eating in restaurants by yourself and it's a very lonely job. We're lucky to be doing what we love but there is a little isolation to it when you're off stage.

AFM: I know working for *Chelsea Lately* was one of your first big projects. Can you tell me what it was like being able to write for the show and work with Chelsea?

FF: I loved it. Writing for her was my first big break. I had actually been an entertainment journalist for seven years before that. That was kind of my day job that I did while I was pursuing comedy and it was kind of all pop culture-centered. So when I got hired at *Chelsea Lately* I didn't realize how much the two worlds would intertwine. All the writing I had done really came in handy because we were writing about pop culture constantly. But to learn how to write for an actual television show was a huge gift for me. It opened my world up a lot and her show was the first show I started headlining so it opened up my stand up world and introduced me to audiences for the first time. It was nothing but positive for me.

And Chelsea was always really good to me. When she hired me I was at a point where so many people had turned me down and didn't really understand my voice and they didn't really get my sense of humor. I could barely even get an agent at that point. She was one of the first people that saw it and got it, and once she gave me that stamp of approval, other people that had never paid attention to me before all of a sudden were like 'oh yeah we've always thought she was funny.' It's funny how that works.

AFM: You wear many hats, from writer and actor, to stand up comedian and producer and even appearing as yourself. What is your favorite role to take on and why?

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FF: I love so many of them for so many different reasons. I think the whole reason I started wearing so many hats was because I learned early on that you have to make your own opportunities out here. When I was coming up, it wasn't a time when looking different and being different was awarded so I knew that if I was going to be an actor I was going to have to write a show that starred me. I knew if I was going to be a stand up comedian that I would have to write my own material that showed my voice. So I started wearing all those hats out of necessity and showing people what I could do.

I love standup because it's live and I meet so many amazing people on the road. You get that immediate feedback so you can tell right away if what you're doing is working. But I've also come to really love acting in a way I never thought I would. I've really loved digging into new characters. I feel like I grew a lot during *The Mindy Project* as an actor and it's taught me so much. And now I'm doing *Champions* and I'm really hoping to explore other roles at different times. I'd like to play in something like a dark comedy at some point. I'd like to branch out and challenge myself to play some different roles that people might not think of me in otherwise.

AFM: Who have been some of your favorite actors or comedians to work with over the years?

FF: I've worked with a lot of amazing women. Men too, but I find that the women have been the ones that have given me my biggest breaks; Chelsea Handler, and Tina Fey was a big one. She helped me a lot in my transition from *Chelsea Lately* to acting. She cast me in a pilot called *Cabot College* which was my first professional acting gig aside from a few guest star roles. She was also the producer on my own pilot that I wrote so I learned so much from her. And she doesn't just put her name on a project; she's involved, hands on, giving notes and just an amazing person to watch. And then Mindy [Kaling] has been incredible to get to work with. And all three of them [Handler, Fey, Kaling] are ones that create their own material and act; they're multifaceted, they're running big companies, they're hiring a lot of people. I don't think Mindy sleeps; she's constantly writing and creating things and she's so smart. I've really loved not only working with these people, but also seeing how they handle themselves in this business has been invaluable to me.

AFM: Who can make you laugh? Who are some of your favorite comedians?

FF: One of my favorite people to work with was Ike Barinholtz on *The Mindy Project*. He is hands down one of the funniest people as an actor and in real life. He has so many stories, knows so many things and he's always got something really funny and interesting to talk about. He cracks me up I think more than anybody. I've been doing *Champions* with Anders Holm and he really surprised me because of all the *Workaholics* guys, he's always been the quieter one in life and I was really blown away by how quick he is on his feet. I didn't realize he worked in the writer's room for a lot of the *Workaholics* episodes and he is just a really smart, funny guy and I don't know that people know the extent of his wit.

AFM: What can fans expect to experience in your upcoming shows in Phoenix?

FF: I'm excited to come to Phoenix because I don't think I've performed there since 2012. It's been a long time and that was my second year into *Chelsea Lately* so even though I was doing well in the comedy world and I had established myself as a headliner, I feel like I've grown so much in the last six years. I'm excited to share my comedy with everybody and I feel like my stand up is very much more based in positivity and storytelling and it's light and fun. There's so much negativity going on in the world right now; so many people are divided and I just want to provide a space for everyone. It doesn't matter what your background is, what your political beliefs are, gay or straight, it doesn't matter. I want to be a stand up for everybody and tell stories that are relatable to everyone. And you can come to my show and forget about all the crazy stuff going on in life and just laugh, have a good time and not worry about anything. So that's what I want to bring to the good folks of the Phoenix and Scottsdale area.

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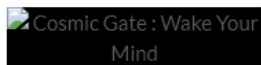
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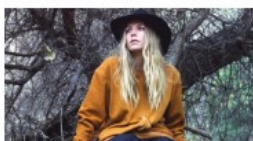
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