

GIRLPOWER

LADIES WHO BRUNCH

Left to right, *Girls* costars Jemima Kirke (in an Anna Sui dress), Lena Dunham (in an Equipment blouse), Zosia Mamet (in a Jill Sander Navy shirt and a Carven striped dress), and Allison Williams (in Zac Posen). Hair: Esther Langham; makeup: Lisa Houghton for YSL Beauty. Shot on location at Allswell, Brooklyn. Details: see In This Issue. Fashion Editor: Lauren Howell.

Great Expectations

THE BRAINCHILD OF 25-YEAR-OLD LENA DUNHAM, HBO'S *GIRLS* TAKES A COMIC LOOK AT THE UNDERWHELMING LIVES OF ENTITLED 20-SOMETHINGS IN NEW YORK. BY CHLOE MALLE. PHOTOGRAPHED BY NORMAN JEAN ROY.



I don't want to freak you out," warns Hannah Horvath, Lena Dunham's character on the forthcoming HBO series *Girls*, "but I think that I may be the voice of my generation." Hannah has just presented her parents with an excerpt from her book of essays, tentatively titled *Midnight Snack*, but in response to their incredulous silence amends her statement: "Or at least a voice of a generation." A hapless intern at a boutique publishing house that refuses to hire her, Hannah is not yet the voice of any generation, but her creator, Dunham, might well be.

The 25-year-old, first noticed for her Web series, *Delusional Downtown Divas*, a self-referential caricature about three art-world offspring trying to gain their own fame, leapt into the cultural consciousness with her 2010 film *Tiny Furniture*, beloved by critics and audiences alike. The film brandished Dunham's unique brand of mumblecore-meets-Larry David comedy, capturing the travails of a jobless liberal arts graduate who moves back into her family's downtown loft—a satirized version of Dunham's own life. (After graduating from Oberlin, she returned home to Tribeca to live with her teenage sister and artist parents, Laurie Simmons and Carroll Dunham.)

Girls, which Dunham also writes and directs, is similarly true-to-life, a comic yet painfully honest portrayal of a cadre of young women trying to find their way. "It's about all the horrifying mistakes a group of young women make while they start their lives in New York," says executive producer Judd Apatow, who became a Dunham mentor after loving *Tiny Furniture*. The foursome includes Jessa, an itinerant citizen of the world played by Jemima Kirke, a painter who costarred in *Tiny Furniture* and was roped into doing the show through her friendship with Dunham—"she's one of the few people who have to be convinced to be on an HBO show," says Dunham slyly; Marnie, a Chelsea gallery girl and Hannah's roommate, played by Allison Williams (a fledgling actress and singer, and the daughter of NBC's Brian); and Shoshanna, Jessa's Juicy jumpsuit-clad cousin, brilliantly enacted by Zosia Mamet, known for her roles in *The Kids Are All Right* and as Peggy Olson's lesbian admirer on *Mad Men*. (continued on page 602)

VIDEO: GO ON SET WITH THE CAST OF *GIRLS*. EXCLUSIVELY ON VOGUE.COM.

(continued from page 601) "I basically just have to remember everything I did then and re-create it."

Despite his ace in the hole, Hoffman admits that he's daunted by "the kind of focus and honesty and specificity and letting go" that playing Willy Loman will demand. But he is also thrilled to play a part that continues to have so much resonance. "We've kind of become a nation of salesmen—even more than when the play was written, which is a little depressing—and when you're a salesman what you're selling is yourself," Hoffman says. "In this country, we're told that success is making money and being famous, and therefore being loved and admired and happy. But that's not the way life works, and Willy's tragedy is that he never stops believing that it is."

The play may tackle Big Themes, but, like most of Miller's plays, at its heart is the story of a father and son. As Biff, the beloved former football hero who sees through his father's empty visions, the 28-year-old English-American actor Andrew Garfield brings the same emotional intensity and boyish vulnerability that made him a standout in films like *The Social Network* and *Never Let Me Go*. Having just finished shooting *The Amazing Spider-Man*, Marc Webb's high-profile reboot of the franchise, Garfield is attuned to the parallels between Peter Parker, an ordinary guy who lives out the fantasy of being a superhero, and Biff, an ordinary guy who sheds his fantasies and grows up. "I'm sure there's part of my subconscious that needed to wake up and to see things as they are, not how I want them to be, to make friends with reality in a really brutal way," Garfield says. "And that's what Biff is doing. He's the only person in his family who's looking at the truth and moving toward it instead of running away. And there's something incredibly brave, almost heroic, about that."

As Nichols discovered all those years ago sitting in the dark of the Morosco Theatre with his girlfriend, *Death of a Salesman* uses the poetry of the stage to reveal our innermost terrors and longings. "It has that time-bending, out-of-body quality of a dream," Nichols says. "But it never lets us forget that we're here now, standing on the earth, wearing our best suit, with cases full of goods to sell. One spot on our tie or a scuff mark on our shoe, and we're through." □

FUNNY BUSINESS

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her skills with the Groundlings improv group in Los Angeles, years in which she worked all manner of part-time jobs

that no doubt fed into her repertoire of outrageously ordinary people and situations. The worst? "I answered phones in a law office," she remembers. "This is going to make me sound so stupid, but the phone system was so confusing, I literally couldn't figure it out. Someone explained it to me. . . . 'OK-well-you-press-this-and-you-put-them-on-hold-and-you-have-to-transfer-them-through-this-thing-and-then-you-have-to-press-these-two-buttons-and-press-0-0. . . .'" She lasted a day.

Working at *SNL*, where she's been for seven years, is by all accounts like diving into a pool, swimming underwater, and not coming up for air for eight months. "It's a six-and-a-half-day week," Wiig says, by the time you count the live show, the after-party, and the after-after party. "This year I've been an after-after sort of girl. Sometimes I need to blow off steam and go dance really hard." The Saturday after she squeezes the *Vogue* shoot into her workweek, she will get home from the show at 2:00 A.M. to be picked up at 4:00 for a 6:00 A.M. flight to L.A., where she will immediately go into hair and makeup to appear at the Golden Globes, where she has been nominated as Best Actress in a Comedy for *Bridesmaids*. "I'm going to need a lot of under-eye work," she deadpans. "Concealer."

You'd never know it from the bad sweaters and slip-on shoes she wears as her *SNL* characters, but Wiig, who is waif-thin and pretty, is a fashion hound off-screen. She admires the idiosyncratic style of Alexa Chung and Chloë Sevigny and loves Alexander McQueen, Nina Ricci, Isabel Marant, and changing up her look. "Lately it's been a seventies vibe with high-waisted pants and the blouses tucked in. Now I'm much more of a sneakers, sweatshirt, leather jacket. . . ." As for the Globes, she hasn't decided what to wear yet. "I'm going for forties-sexy with a little bit of rock 'n' roll and kind of a little ghostly," she says cryptically. "I always say I want to look haunted." (She ends up wearing a suitably spectral floaty and flesh-colored Bill Blass dress.)

Wiig is cagey about how long she will be staying at *SNL* now that her light has so definitively burst out from under its bushel. She is working on several scripts, including one with her *Bridesmaids* co-writer Annie Mumolo that she says won't be a sequel. She would like to direct. And she's feeling less afraid these days to take creative risks. "When you go out of your comfort zone and it works there's nothing more satisfying." Expectations of her are infinite. "I don't go to

a dinner party where people *don't* refer to her as a genius," says Penn. "She's a writer, she can invent characters and stories, and she has a touch that translates. It's her game to play." □

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

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While *Girls* tracks a quartet of young women confronting single life in the city, the likenesses to *Sex and the City* end there, though that hasn't stopped critics and Internet rumormongers from comparing the two. "It's the life that girls who grew up watching *Sex and the City* thought they would have in New York," explains Dunham, whose characters present a comical mix of entitlement and insecurity. "When I was thinking about creating the show, I thought about *My So-Called Life* if Gilda Radner was on it." And while Carrie Bradshaw sashayed down her uptown Manhattan hallway-cum-closet in boys' briefs, Manolo Blahnik mules, and an effortless six-pack, Hannah Horvath sits naked in her Greenpoint, Brooklyn, bathtub eating a cupcake, a soft wobble of upper arm hanging over the tub and a turquoise mess of tattoos (illustrations from children's books) crocheted across her back. "She's very brave and not concerned about embarrassing herself in any way," Apatow says of Dunham. "I think because her parents are artists she does it quite naturally. She's grown up around so much creating, she just thinks that's what you do, like eating or sleeping."

Dunham's ability to be both awkward and endearing makes her an unlikely heroine but one who is refreshingly real. *Girls* taps into the Zeitgeist with rawness and irreverence, from Hannah's earnest Google searches—"stuff that gets up around the sides of condoms"—to Marnie's hierarchy of communication with a boyfriend: "the totem of chat . . . the lowest, that would be Facebook, followed by G-chat, then texting, then e-mail, then phone." (Face-to-face is ideal but "is not of this time.") "These are the girls who live in the apartment across the hall from you that you've never talked to but you've observed," says Williams. However, your neighbors across the hall aren't awaited with the same anticipation and eagerness as these *Girls*. "*Hype* is always a terrible word unless it's used in a rap song," Dunham says of the buildup surrounding the series, which debuts on April 15, "but I think that when you're really excited about what you've made, it helps the situation." □