

It's a chilly minus 18 in Toronto when I Skype call Avocado Toast creators Heidi Lynch and Perrie Voss. I've had a friend crush on the pair since we met at ClexaCon in November last year, and I'm dying to know more about the show and when we might see it on our screens. But, like the true Brit I am, I have to ask about the weather first. "It's soul robbing," Heidi deadpans. "Officially bad," Perrie confirms. Ok, housekeeping out of the way, let's talk Toast...

DIVA: The show is a dramedy about sex and parents, and what I've seen has made me laugh out loud. How did it come about?

HEIDI: Perrie and I met at a very interesting point in our lives where we were going through some massive life moments. We were doing a play together in a small town and living together too. We were really there for each other and formed a strong friendship and bond. The play ended and we were still going through the same shitty things and didn't want to not see each other every day so we were like, "Let's write about it!" We're both super goofy and weird and comedy has such a wonderful power to diffuse hard moments. But we were just writing it to be together, basically, so we had an excuse to hang out a lot.

PERRIE: Since then, we've been evolving. We've even changed it since we saw you at ClexaCon. We have new story development, we've done a lot of research, we get feedback from producers and fans. It's kind of cool to think we know something or have an idea

CARRIE LYELL MEETS THE CREATORS OF A NEW WEB SERIES WEARING ITS QUEER CREDENTIALS ON ITS SLEEVE

and then people are like, "It's more like this." We're like, "That's actually a really great way of thinking about it."

What kind of feedback have you had?

HEIDI: It's been such an educational, wonderful, eye-opening experience. We got messages from people all over the world, from the bisexual community specifically, hoping our show could be more than it was in the trailer, and hoping that we could USE the word "bisexual". People were like, "I love the energy, I love the friendship, I love the dynamic, BUT. If you're going to have this bisexual character, can she say the word 'bisexual'?" That has informed the way that we have developed the story further.

Sounds like an exciting collaboration between you both and the queer community. But how do you maintain the truth of the story?

HEIDI: That's been really interesting. Initially, we were both writing based on a lot of truth. I wanted to write my experience of falling in love with a woman for the first time, what coming out meant to me and how I was going to label myself. But then you see thousands of people watch it and maybe get upset that it's not exactly their experience. I don't want my words to be hurtful to anybody, or for my journey to erase someone else's journey. This is our first time writing something so we really wanted to follow that golden rule: "write what you know". But it's developed, and the characters have totally devel-

oped too. Molly and Elle are based on truth but are an amalgamation of the people we've met and the stories we've heard.

PERRIE: There isn't really an original story. We're all telling each other's stories on some level, so hearing what other people are going through is really key to making ours a full story. We had this myopic viewpoint but finding other people who went through it, it's like, "Let's blow this open". What's the meta conversation?

Why do you think it's still so radical to say the word "bisexual"?

HEIDI: It's awkward to say, because it has sex in the word. Sex is on the table as soon as you say "I'm biSEXual." We were like, "You know what? Fuck it." So in our trailer coming up, Molly says that. She realises she's gonna come out to her mom, and she's like, "No one should have to say the word sex at their mom's face." That's a way of honouring what I was going through and how funny and ridiculous it was for me, but also using the word, talking about the word, not being ashamed or afraid of the word bisexual, but opening the discussion up.

In what other ways do you think Avocado Toast is pushing queer content forward?

PERRIE: One of the biggest things was that we wanted to make sure we were showing a full, fleshed out human being who happens to be bisexual. So rather than it just focussing solely on what that is, Molly is an entire

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character. She's a full human being, you see all aspects of her while she's going through this. That was really important for us to show.

HEIDI: The other thing was a desire to move through the coming out story. That was in a lot of the feedback we heard. I think that is something that can help the queer community and the straight community, to see this flash in the pan coming out moment that's really not elaborated on so much and is moved through quite quickly.

What other issues does the show deal with?

HEIDI: Perrie has written on some true events that happened in her life. When you're an adult and your parents get divorced, there's not really any sensitivity from society. It's like, "You're an adult, move on." But it doesn't hurt any less. It changes the dynamic of your family, it changes the way you look at a union, it changes the way you look at love. And even though you're an adult, watching your grown baby boomer parents date again and experience a new sex life again and all of that...

PERRIE: It's the worst. I was 32 when that happened, and all of the questions of your foundation get brought up. You're like, "Well, who am I? How do I even function as a human being?" You're forced to figure out, going bottom to top, who you are.

HEIDI: We started with our own personal experiences and then we delved into a year of research, and with the baby boomer generation, it's happen-

ing in staggering numbers. They're calling it the grey divorce.

How do you balance drama with humour in your writing?

HEIDI: Extremes! [Laughs] All moments are felt fully. It's not going to be a light comedy, but it treads that line that Perrie and I were going through when we were cooped up in that house, doing that play and stuff in our life was exploding. We were quite probably on the verge of crying or laughing at any moment. If we went to that place where we were getting upset, we would just make each other laugh. That was the basis of how our friendship was formed and that's the dynamic that we are hopefully creating with Molly and Elle.

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“IT'S ABOUT FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS AND HOW THEY INSPIRE”

Your wonderful friendship is at the heart of all of this. What have you learned about each other in the process of making Avocado Toast?

PERRIE: We've learned so much, oh my god! What's amazing is we've had maybe two disagreements over three years. So we've definitely learned how to communicate better. We know how each other works now and if one of us gets pulled into our extreme, the

other one has to come over and be like "Ok, this isn't how we're working. Come back."

HEIDI: We've really learned what parts each other likes to do and hates to do.
PERRIE: Yeah, we've definitely learned to work with each other and when one of us is floundering, the other one is just like, "Ok, let's just have a moment together and figure this out."

It's so heartwarming to see a project about women supporting women. Is it important to have that ethos woven throughout the production?

HEIDI: Yeah! Our director is a wonderful boss lady with great vision and we're excited to work with her. And our cast is really female heavy because the crux of the show is their relationship and their relationship with their mothers. It's about platonic female relationships and the many ways that women can support and inspire each other. Which is very, very important. I have so many little nieces and I think of them all the time when I'm making things.

PERRIE: Growing up, I didn't see friendships on screen the way that I have friendships now. If it gets petty, I'm out. I think it's really important to show that women can be friends in different ways and in different circumstances and have a really mutual respect. **D**

The new trailer for Avocado Toast drops on 1 March. Find out more about the show on Instagram @avocadotoastseries and at avocadotoastseries.com



Heidi (left) and Perrie in a still from their upcoming trailer