



SAMANTHA BEE

THE NEWCANADIAN SPEAKS WITH THE DAILY SHOW CORRESPONDENT

Craig Silverman

Samantha Bee never expected to end up on the world's most celebrated fake news show, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. She was a working actor and the member of a comedy troupe in Toronto when the show came looking for a new correspondent in the city. A couple of months later, she had the job. Now her snarky delivery and hilarious segments can be seen four nights a week on CTV and The Comedy Network in Canada, and on more and more stations around the world. In the spring, *The NewCanadian* came calling for her thoughts on blackjack dealing, making it in the U.S. and Wal-Mart workers in Quebec.

YOU RECENTLY HOSTED COMEDY DAY ON CBC, APPEARED AT THE JUST FOR LAUGHS FESTIVAL IN MONTREAL AND WERE A PRESENTER AT THE GENIE AWARDS. ARE YOU GETTING MORE WORK IN CANADA NOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN THE STATES?

Absolutely. It's really funny, and I have a running joke with friends from Canada who live in the States. When I get asked to do something, it's like, "Canada's calling and they want to claim you." I have always wanted to work in Canada and I made a living at it, which is a rare privilege that I don't take for granted. That said, 75 per cent of the casting directors in Toronto wouldn't have known me if I fell into their lap.

YOU DID A LOT OF COMMERCIALS WHEN YOU WORKED HERE. WHAT WAS YOUR WORST EXPERIENCE?

Hands down my worst commercial was for a lottery. They aged me and made me look 85 years old.

SO HOW DID A RELATIVELY UNKNOWN CANADIAN COMIC/ACTRESS END UP ON THE DAILY SHOW?

It's a really boring story. They came to Toronto and I auditioned for them, and they hired me. They didn't know of me beforehand and so it was really random. I did one audition in Toronto and a callback in New York a month or two later.

WERE YOU INTIMIDATED?

I was terrified, but Jon [Stewart] was so personable and he really put me at ease. He didn't make it seem like a huge deal, so I felt pretty relaxed. Later I found out that the entire staff was watching me on closed circuit TV.

WHO IS THE MOST PUNCHABLE MEDIA PERSONALITY?

It's so tough to pick one but I'd have to say Robert Novak. He's so horrible.

HE SEEMS TO BE A BIG TARGET FOR THE SHOW BECAUSE OF HIS ROLE IN REVEALING THE IDENTITY OF VALERIE PLAME, A COVERT CIA OPERATIVE. JON STEWART REFERRED TO HIM AS "A DOUCHE BAG FOR LIBERTY" IN SEVERAL SEGMENTS. IS THAT ONE INSTANCE WHERE THE SHOW DECIDED TO MAKE A SERIOUS POINT ABOUT SOMETHING IT SAW AS BEING WRONG?

It's not like he's the buzz in the office, but I think people genuinely can't believe his audacity. It should almost be the buzz of every workplace, including where he works, and they should let him go.

Photos: Norman Jean Roy

SAMANTHA BEE OFFERS HER HILARIOUS SEGMENTS WITH THE PERFECT SNARKY DELIVERY.

WHEN JON STEWART AND OTHER PEOPLE FROM THE SHOW GET ASKED ABOUT ITS IMPACT AND THE EFFECT IT IS HAVING ON YOUNGER VIEWERS, THEY TEND TO POOH-POOH THAT NOTION.

I will pooh-pooh it too. It's just such dangerous territory if you take yourself seriously on a comedy show because then it's not funny anymore. We just want to be funny. We're not supposed to be meaningful... Nobody at the show believes the hype, and that's a good thing. Because of that, I feel the quality will remain the same.

WERE YOU INTERESTED IN THE NEWS OR A CAREER IN JOURNALISM WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER?

I was not interested in working in the field of news reportage, but I've always been interested in what's going on. The quality of newsgathering in Canada is so great by comparison to the U.S. When I was in Jonquière, Quebec [for a *Daily Show* story], I was watching *CBC Newsworld* and it was such a breath of fresh air. It's just so much more pure, and maybe a little more boring [than U.S. news media].

WHAT IS YOUR MAIN ROLE ON THE SHOW?

The field pieces really are where I get to be myself and be most active in making decisions and coming up with stuff.

YOU DID A PIECE ON ELECTION DAY IN THE U.S. WHERE IT WAS BASICALLY WHAT JOURNALISTS CALL A "STREETER" AND YOU GO OUT ON THE STREET TO ASK PEOPLE THEIR OPINIONS. YOU ASKED SOME OFTEN-OFFENSIVE QUESTIONS RATHER THAN STICKING WITH WHOM THEY VOTED FOR. DID YOU COME UP WITH THEM ON THE FLY?

We went out in the field with just a producer, a cameraman and myself, and we were like "What the fuck are we gonna do?" We had to come back with something and we were really panicky. The idea we latched on to was that you go into this voting booth with a shroud around it and it is supposed to be such a secret. Then you leave and someone is there with a camera from the media or they are doing exit polling. We said, "Let's be as obnoxious as we can be." People were screaming at us. We shot for hours.

WHY, WHEN THEY KNOW THEY WILL END UP BEING THE BUTT OF JOKES, DO PEOPLE TALK TO YOU ON THE SHOW?

I guess people just really want to be on TV. They want to be on TV whether they have a message or think it will impress their friends and family, or launch their careers. I mean, come on.

CAN PEOPLE GET THEIR MESSAGE OUT ON THE SHOW?

I think people do get their story out in a weird way on our show. When I went to Jonquière, Quebec, to do a story about Wal-Mart closing a store there after the employees unionized, [the ex-employees] were really worried that the story would not be clearly told. But they definitely got their point made even though I think they felt they looked bad. The way I see it is that it made Wal-Mart look bad. They didn't understand our sense of irony. That just doesn't translate. But in the end, Wal-Mart always looks bad.

IS IT HARD TO DO YOUR INTERVIEWS WHEN YOUR SUBJECT TRIES TO CRACK JOKES OF THEIR OWN OR LAUGHS AT YOUR QUESTIONS?

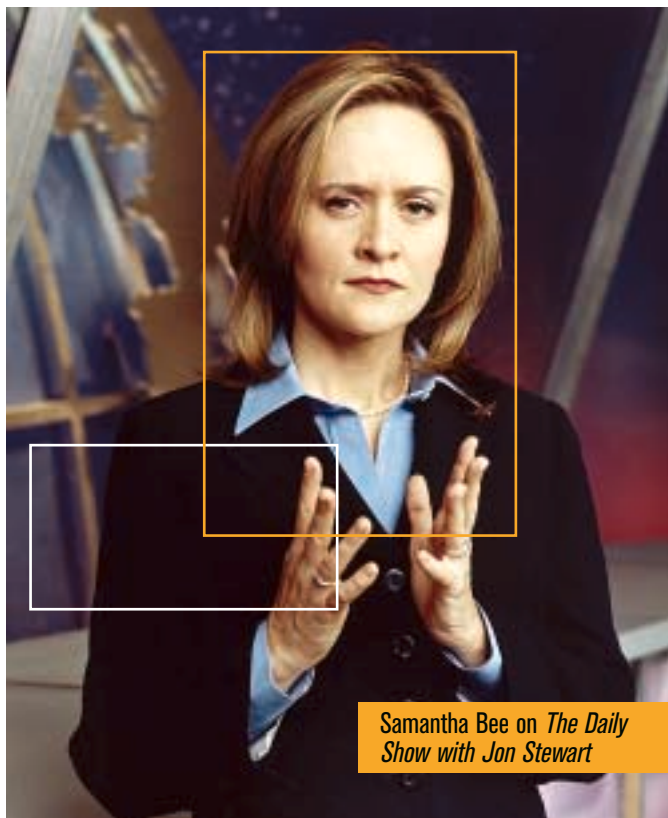
It can be difficult for us but we beat the humour out of them eventually.

FILL IN THIS BLANK: MOST PEOPLE WOULDN'T KNOW I ONCE TOOK LESSONS IN...

Ooh! I took lessons on how to be a blackjack dealer at an illegal Vietnamese casino. It was in an industrial park outside Ottawa. They yelled at me, and I had to stop because I couldn't deal fast enough. It was a sweatshop for young white women.

YOUR SHOW AT JUST FOR LAUGHS WAS CALLED *THE DAILY SHOW SECRETS...REVEALED!* WHAT SCANDALOUS GOSSIP DO YOU HAVE TO SHARE?

I've got a whole shitload of bad gossip for you. Guess what? Everyone likes everyone else. That show will be a total waste of time—a big group hug. This is totally a dream job.



Samantha Bee on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*