

ROGUE

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LEIGHTON MEESTER

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LEIGHTON MEESTER

Written by Rachael Roth
Photographed by Benjo Anwas
Styled by Rachel Wirkus @ The Wall Group
Assistant Stylist: James Moran
Hair by Kylee Heath @ Starworks
Makeup by Kayleen McAdams @ Starworks
Creative Direction by Heather Seidler
Manicurist: Sara Chue @ Exclusive Artists

As the lead in Fox's new comedy, *Making History*, Leighton Meester plays a colonial woman turned feminist through the power of time travel—and she's using that power for good.

Jewelry by Eva Gehren
Bodysuit by Rani Zakhem
Skirt by Gemy

Horseback riding, firing cannons, and shooting muskets are just a few of the daring pursuits Leighton Meester performs in her new show **Making History**, premiering in March on Fox. “You get burned though,” she tells us, explaining the pyrotechnics involved in making the gun smoke. As for shooting the cannon, they had to get it in one take. “We were like, ‘we’re not doing it again, we’re all deaf,’” she laughs.

But it’s hard to imagine Meester as anything but poised; she practically floats in the white gown she’s wearing for Rogue’s cover shoot, unfinching as a leaf blower rustles her hair from a distance. (She does ask if she can ditch the heels by the end of the shoot, though.)

And while she admits shooting a gun was pretty cool, it’s not without awareness of a tense political climate that *Making History*’s writers incorporate a weapon into the script. “We make jokes about it in the show which are very applicable to present day, [like] how a musket is a mass killing machine, ‘it shoots a bullet a minute!’ Which is ridiculous,” she says with a knowing look, “because it’s not an automatic weapon.”

If Meester had a time machine, she knows exactly which era she’d visit: “I love the 1500s, when Henry VIII was ruling,” she says, adding, “Any time but the present may be terrible, as far as health and violence and rights for anybody but white men go.”

And that’s exactly what her character comes to learn in *Making History*.

Through humor, heart, and time travel, the show’s episodes tackle issues like sexism and racism. Meester plays Paul Revere’s daughter, Deborah, a wide-eyed colonial woman whose perspective on the world changes as she travels through decades with her lover, Dan (Adam Pally), and sees the injustices against women of her era. “I’m proud to work on a show that uplifts the female lead, and has a not-so-subtle yet approachable commentary on the treatment and mistreatment of women throughout the ages,” she says, naming birth control activist Margaret Sanger and home-birth crusader Ina May Gaskin as women she admires.

Making History marks Meester’s return to acting full-time after a short hiatus. She married husband Adam Brody in 2014 (the two met on the set of their movie *The Oranges*, and shared the screen again in the film *Life Partners*). In 2015, they welcomed their first child, daughter Arlo Day Brody.

After her break from acting, Meester didn’t want to jump right into a show, unless it was exactly right. When the opportunity to work on *Making History* arose, it ticked all the boxes of what she was looking for in a series. “When I went into [the show], and when I decided that I wanted to work consistently on something, I had criteria. I read other [scripts] too, but this was just the one. It was love at first sight,” she says, of *Making History*, fluttering her eyelashes for effect. “We have that adventure element where we’re chasing bad guys, and going into battle, and hanging with gangsters. It’s all just really fantastical, but there’s also a really grounded love story,” she says, citing the first page of the script as what really hooked her on the project. “The opening scene is Dan and Deb stealing away in the night, and talking in hushed tones about their love for each other. It was just so sweet, but also really spoke to me, and was the kind of humor that I appreciate when I watch TV.” The show will last for only nine episodes, which she says makes it even more special. “I just can’t believe that it actually came true,” she says of the opportunity.

Meester feels fulfilled with the work she’s doing on the show, which takes up the majority of her time these days, but she also finds time for another passion: songwriting. “I really have been missing writing, so I’ve been doing it on and off [for] the last year or so.” Her process involves herself and a guitar, recording on her phone or computer and improvising over chord loops until something sticks. “I worked with awesome people when I released my first album in 2014,” she says of *Heartstrings*, a collection of folk-pop tracks that she wrote mostly in Budapest and put out on Vagrant Records. “I’m hoping to do it again,” she adds.

Before releasing the album, Meester was featured on Cobra Starship’s club anthem *Good Girls Go Bad*, and she collaborated with Robin Thicke on the 2009 track, *Somebody to Love*. But *Heartstrings* is something all her own. At their core, the tracks are singer/songwriter medleys, soaked in lustrous, ‘90s pop production. Her reverberated vocals are delicate but firm, calling to mind The Cardigans’ Nina Persson, as the lyrics wrestle with love and vulnerability.

And it seems whatever she releases next will feature the same emotional honesty as the first album. “I’m writing a bit about my current state of mind, which brings me to a happier place, but I still find a lot of inspiration from past experiences, and that leads to some more melancholy that I just can’t escape,” she tells us.

As an actor, Meester has similarly pursued projects that fall outside the realm of what fans would expect. In 2014 she acted in *Of Mice and Men* on Broadway alongside James Franco (she actually got her start acting in theater at a young age before transitioning to the screen), and played a character known only as “Curley’s wife”—a woman who is mocked with contempt, whose death is used to get laughs. Meester even penned an essay for Huffington Post around the time of the show’s run exploring why her character is so hated, and the underlying feminist subtexts of the 1930s novella. In her essay, she also observed that the audience at her performances was notably younger. “It was so cool to bring people that might only have seen *Gossip Girl* [the cult drama she starred in for six seasons] and be like, ‘look at this cool thing that I’m into,’ [so they could] have a taste of that too,” she tells us.

“I think I’m different,” she says of filming a series today versus in 2007. “I started *Gossip Girl* 10 years ago when I was 20, and I’m 30 now. I loved doing it, and now I’m doing something else that I love, and something new that’s a little bit more my taste as a 30 year old, something I’ve grown into.” And her audience grew alongside her. “I feel so lucky that I can have such amazing fans and they either grew up with [the show] or they’re growing up with it now. I’ve also heard people say, ‘Oh we watch that as a throwback,’” she laughs.

On *Gossip Girl*, which chronicles the lives of an elite group of young Upper East Siders, Meester played Blair Waldorf, who was regarded by fans as one of the few, if only, likeable characters, and brought impeccable comedic timing and sincerity to the show. Despite Blair being vastly different from her character on *Making History*, it’s easy to see what Meester values through the roles she chooses. Both Blair and Deb are grounded women with integrity, adding more strong female characters to the pop culture landscape.

Through her new show, Meester sheds light on women previously overlooked in history. “It’s telling that there wasn’t really a lot of specific information about women back then. There’s a lot about the clothing and the lifestyle and things like that, [but] people didn’t document women in the exact same way [as they did men], unless they were of a very high stature,” she says.

But it’s clear many eyes are on Meester, who has so far challenged our expectations of the female lead on television—and we’ll be watching as she continues to make history.

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Dress by Dan Kohn



Dress by Julesa Domani
Jewelry by Eva Fehren and L Frank



Dress by Wai-ming
Jewelry by L Frank, Eva Fehren and Liv Ballard



Dress by Tris Lerbou
Shoes by Jerome Rousseau
Earrings by Randall Scott
Rings by Eva Fehren



Dress by Alexandrine
Fur by Unreal