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Is 'Mrs. Maisel's' Susie gay? 'She falls in love with minds,' says Alex Borstein



"Character actors tend to be characters that stand out in other people's journeys. It's not my drive, I don't feel like I need to," Alex Borstein says of her Emmy-nominated role on "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel." (Kathryn Wirsing)

By RANDEE DAWN

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Meyerson: grouser, loner, cynic. Yet we love her as much as every other confection in the series, thanks to the bright-eyed, deadpan performance of Alex Borstein, a palate cleanser like no other.

The three-time Emmy winner (for voicing Lois in “Family Guy” and twice for playing Susie), Borstein Zoomed in from quarantine in Spain to talk to The Envelope about all things Susie, gross humor and watching the U.S. burn from afar.

What’re you doing in Barcelona?

I’m here when I’m not working in New York. It was supposed to be just for a year, right when “Maisel” was starting. I was like, “I want to do a year. I want my kids [Barnaby, 11; Henrietta, 7] to experience that. I’d been here once [before] but only for a few days with a backpack and no money after college. Then I fell in love with it, and now it’s been four years.

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Is it hard being so far away from your family and friends?

It’s hard now. Being separated from my family, that’s been kind of hard. Even though I probably wouldn’t be able to see my parents anyway if I was in L.A. with them, because my kids would kill them. COVID being just one of those ways. So that’s the only thing. But watching the U.S. burn from afar has been very interesting.

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What were you told about Susie before you started playing her?

I heard Amy [Sherman-Palladino, cocreator of “Maisel”] talk about this project loosely long before she wrote and pitched it; we’ve been friends a long time. We had lunch at Musso & Frank in L.A., a real old-school hut where we’d have a steak and share a baked potato just to be gluttonous pigs.

When I decided to move to Barcelona, Amy was like, “Would you still consider auditioning for this part?” I was hoping to hate it. Then she sent it to me and I loved it. I flew in, I put on clothes. There wasn’t much research or study. So, some of it was Amy writing to me — not *for* me, but I think she had me in mind to some degree. There’s a lot of Amy in [Susie].

You were cast as Sookie on her [“Gilmore Girls,”](#) but then “Mad TV,” where you had a regular gig, wouldn’t release you. At the time, were you devastated, worried it would wreck your career to say no?

I figure most of the time you operate out of fear. There’s abject fear in this business that no one will ever ask you, or you’ll never have another audition in your life. I figured that was it.

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How often do you get asked if Susie is gay? In the era the show takes place, that’d be a big plot point.

would be like, “We don’t want it to be labeled.” I like that she’s never had the luxury of having a relationship or even exploring it. I wouldn’t be surprised if she’s never even had her first kiss. She’s absolutely in love with Midge to some degree, but I think she falls in love with minds.

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Susie kind of became more popular than what you imagine a supporting character would be. I definitely don’t feel the weight that Rachel [Brosnahan, as Midge] feels. Rachel has to carry the show. She must remain marvelous. There’s definitely a freedom to not having to carry that. And I don’t have to be perceived as likable in any way, shape or form, on or off the character.

I’ve always loved the types of characters who come in — Rhoda, tearing it up, Mary having to hold down the storyline. It’s always more fun to play those, but maybe I talked myself into it because that’s all I’ll ever be able to do. So maybe I talked myself into it.

Why is that?

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What makes you laugh?

On “[Family Guy](#),” a lot of the things that make me laugh are things that are super true to the character. What I like is storytelling — a story with a beginning, middle and end that maybe launches into a song. But I’m also like an 8-year-old boy; a lot of stupid things make me giggle: dumb sex jokes, poop jokes. And now I have kids and I enjoy them all over again.

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