



AWARDS

When Midge and Lenny had sex: Rachel Brosnahan and Luke Kirby on their comedic coupling

BY RANDEE DAWN

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Luke Kirby plays real-life comic Lenny Bruce to Rachel Brosnahan's Midge Maisel in "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel." "We all know how it plays out. We just don't know how we get there," Kirby says of the onscreen romance between the two. Bruce died in 1966. (Emma Mead)

After four seasons of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," Midge (Rachel Brosnahan) and Lenny (Luke Kirby) haven't spent much time together on-screen. But when they do share scenes, they spark like few others — a connection that, well, climaxed at the end of Season 4. But because Kirby is playing the real-life comic Lenny Bruce, who died in 1966 at age 40 of an overdose, it's impossible to imagine this union ending happily. The question now is, how will it play out when the show comes to a close next season? Brosnahan and Kirby met up in New York for an Envelope interview in the Bronx, covering the language of their pairing, whether it's meant to mirror reality, and what makes them the show's best couple — for now.

When you two are together on camera, it can feel like a totally different show. Is that a misinterpretation?



Midge] live in a bubble. We get to hang and experiment.

Luke Kirby: [Lenny] has a mythic presence in spite of whatever I do, so he's treated with care inside the show. It's bound to bring a different quality. There's something in Midge that reflects back to this mythic presence. He sees something in her.

Brosnahan: Something familiar.

Kirby: Something exciting, simpatico. It sparks an appetite for them to venture out into something.



Rachel Brosnahan as Miriam 'Midge' Maisel and Luke Kirby as Lenny Bruce in Season 4 of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel." (Amazon Prime Video)



and it evolve because you two play so well together.

Brosnahan: I know this wasn't planned. Within the show it feels like one of the places where Midge grows the most are the scenes with Lenny. I think they've felt inspired to continue the relationship between the characters in a way that's really surprising and fun.

Kirby: Honestly, they haven't told me. I thought it was just in my best interest to show up and do this one [episode]. But then it was great to get invited back for whatever peculiar reason.

Brosnahan: "Whatever peculiar reason!" Because this one [points to him] is a marvel onscreen.

Were you aware that when Bruce died he was dating a comedian named Marlene Weinstock? A woman with the same initials as Miriam "Midge" Weissman?

Brosnahan: [Shocked] Everything I know is a lie! It is news to me. They do like to keep us on our toes.

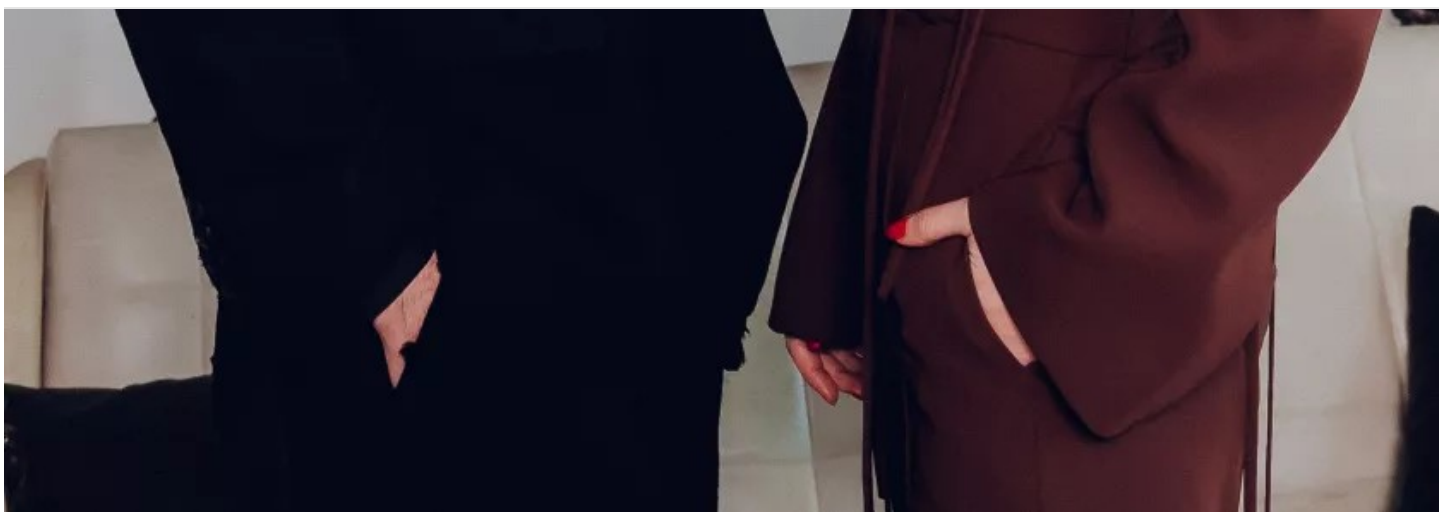
Kirby: I wouldn't put it past [show creator Amy Sherman-Palladino and her husband, executive producer Daniel Palladino]. They're so on top of their work that it's almost not something they planned. Just by virtue of the work, that manifests those kinds of coincidences.

Brosnahan: They're encyclopedic brains; they know everything about history. I can't have a prolonged conversation with Dan without feeling like I need to go read every newspaper that's ever been written. I am sure that sometimes those things enter the back of their brain and make their way to the forefront as time and



Kirby: They like to throw curveballs. What you get out of that are performances where it's not actors inside their heads, and there's something beautiful when that happens.





“Within the show it feels like one of the places where Midge grows the most are the scenes with Lenny,” Brosnahan says of working with Luke Kirby. (Emma Mead)

One of those curveballs was how Midge’s engagement to Benjamin just disappeared between Seasons 2 and 3.

Brosnahan: I’ve stopped asking questions and learn to take information as it comes and figure out how it works. Benjamin, for Midge, was a regression. He was perfect on paper and exactly what she wanted from her life before it blew up the first time. It was tough, because Zach Levi is so damn charming, the audience fell in love with him.

Kirby: If they’d stayed together, it’d be like ... “Dr. Kildare.”

Brosnahan: She’d be making brisket and going to the Gaslight on weekends and have another baby.

So where we leave off at the end of Season 4 is that Lenny and Midge have finally —

Brosnahan: Boned.



Brosnahan: “Balled” is so much worse.

So after they had sex —

Kirby: Consummated. Copulated.

Brosnahan: Under the watchful eyes of the Lord ...

Well, this is going to make for an awkward segue, but Bruce’s story ends in tragedy. Do you think that plays into how the relationship feels for the audience or is being constructed by the writers?

Brosnahan: I couldn’t speak on behalf of the writers. But I do think it adds an urgency and curiosity for the audience. We all know how it plays out. We just don’t know how we get there. He has a heavyweight presence on the show, no matter what happens. It’s amazing that works.





(Emma Mead)

You two had known each other on the show for a couple of years before the sex scene. What was that like to do?

Brosnahan: We laughed from start to finish.

Kirby: We had fun. It's a great story to get to live in — not just that scene in the hotel; it's their whole history. It's the police raid.

Brosnahan: It's him throwing s— at her on stage.

Kirby: It's so neat to get to live in that world; it's a cool experience. It feels like we executed it in a way that deepened their humanity and their relationship. I think we achieved something where the spell wasn't broken. It complicates the spell — and then it leads to Carnegie Hall.

We're left with Midge staring up at a billboard in a snowstorm as the season closes out. What does that mean?

Brosnahan: "Go forward" is the message she sees amid the cold and hurt from the scene before. That's the spine of Midge, an important reminder for her to return to herself.

Kirby: She's on an odyssey. She chose to live her ethics. It's meant to be messy.

Brosnahan: There's definitely been periods where I'm frustrated with the decisions that Midge is making and the ways she's getting in her own way, and I just want to



FROM HERE.

Kirby: I like her.

Brosnahan: I do too.



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