

DRO

Deakin University's Research Repository

This is the published version:

Royal, Autumn 2012, Fantasy man : one woman's experience working with Noel Fielding, *Lip*, pp. 1-1.

Available from Deakin Research Online:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30052431>

Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that permission has been obtained for items included in Deakin Research Online. If you believe that your rights have been infringed by this repository, please contact drosupport@deakin.edu.au

Copyright : 2012, Lip Media

fantasy man: one woman's experience working with noel fielding

4 May 2012

lip magazine



For Bella Gray, working with Noel Fielding, flamboyant co-creator of *The Mighty Boosh*, still seems like a surreal dream. Employed as a buyer and costume assistant for Fielding's latest television show, *Noel Fielding's Luxury Comedy*, Gray dashed around London, collecting aluminium foil, glitter and neon coloured fabric – anything to support Fielding's absurdist visual humour.

In 2007 Gray relocated from Melbourne to London to pursue work in the fashion industry. Gray began work in retail, working in sale and styling assistant roles, and then as manager for a vintage clothing store. It was this work experience, along with a change of residence, which launched Gray into her current work. Gray moved into a share-house with a stylist and costume designer, Ameena Callender, who encouraged Gray to become her assistant. 'At the beginning I was working for free, as you have to, mostly on music videos and commercials,' says Gray.

Gray's assistant work for Callender introduced her to Fielding, his *Luxury Comedy* project, and his need for a skillful costume department. Aware of his preference for working with friends and previous associates, Gray was especially nervous before her initial meeting with Fielding, but they connected over a cup of tea and Gray started work that afternoon.

Fielding's recruitment process might seem nepotistic, but as Gray explains, it was his determination to encourage a friendly and nurturing atmosphere that allowed for a freedom of artistic expression. 'I think Noel really felt like he had to have an environment where everybody around was really supportive, so he

could feel comfortable enough to do whatever he wanted and everybody else in the cast could do whatever they wanted, too.'

Gray's determination to work in the fashion and arts industry was not always supported, so working with Fielding, and his team, demonstrated to Gray just how energising encouragement can be for the creative process. Gray tells of Fielding's discovery that the show's runner was also an aspiring actor, so Fielding gave him an acting opportunity in the show. Obviously appreciative of Fielding's generous nature Gray sighs and says, 'I have a feeling nothing will be quite the same after working with Noel.'

Criticism for *Luxury Comedy* cites that the sketches are too forced and hedonistic, but Gray confidently addresses this reproach. 'None of us would deny that it's kind of over the top and self indulgent, but that's sort of the point, and that's why there are so many artistic references – the René Magritte backpack, the Jackson Pollock suitcase – I think in a way it's saying art is a luxury, but it's a really important luxury and I think in England right now, that's a really important idea.'

Gray's behind-the-scenes perspective isn't one that's often explored, but it's an essential role to consider. There's no denying Fielding's artistic vision, but when it comes to a concept like *Luxury Comedy*, it's one that couldn't be achieved without collaboration and that's what's so fantastic about his humour.

By Autumn Royal