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Carleigh Herbert On Her Love of 70s Makeup And Applying Those Notorious Penis Prosthetics for 'Minx'

by Joey Moser — June 17, 2022 in ADTV, ADTV Feature, ADTV Main 0



(Photo: Katrina Marciniowski / HBO Max)



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Sex! Now that I've gotten your attention, let's talk about makeup!

HBO Max's *Minx* is a flirty, female empowerment comedy wrapped in the guise of a dirty romp. It lures you in with the promise of naked men, but you end up staying because you are floored by stories of the wage gap or sexual harassment. Makeup Department Head, Carleigh Herbert, has a love of this decade in terms of makeup, and she dishes on the delicate challenges of contributing to the Renaissance of Male Full Frontal.

The 1970's was a time of a lot of experimentation both personally and socially. It always felt like change was right around the corner, and that excitement also extends to how people would dress and make themselves up every day. Herbert loves a lot of things about this particular time period for makeup, because you could make up your own rules.

"There's a huge difference from early 1970's and the late 1970's. In the first part of the decade, you have the feminist movement and the hippie movement. People were scaling back even though there were so many styles at this time. It was about clean skin and a played down look. In the early part of the decade, a lot of people were getting into self-expression, and they were coming out of the 1960's where people were really dolling themselves up. People held onto that late 60s vibe, and they barely had makeup on their face. What I like about the 70s is how it's very stylized and very all over the place. Tina does her makeup in the nines. Bambi is a bronze queen with a lot of lip gloss. Joyce is very played down and minimalist. In her past, she played with makeup. All the different worlds were very playful."



(Photo: Katrina Marciniowski / HBO Max)

Our fearless leader, Joyce Prigger, sticks out no matter where she goes. When she agrees to work Doug Renetti at Bottom Dollar Publications, she appears to be subtler than the models who strut the halls and pose for photographs. Later on in the season, Joyce looks more mature and made up than the college students she spars with when they challenge her on her magazine's style. We also learn how much makeup she used to wear when she was trying to please other people.

"When we first got the character, I didn't know we were going back to the 60s yet. She was described as big on feminism and very minimalist. Joyce isn't someone who plays with her makeup very much. At first, she's very dressed down, but she's not going to really beat her face. She's strong but simple. When you go into her backstory, she played herself up, and she gave a shit about what men thought of her. When I kept researching, I kept seeing Cheryl Tiegs, and she had pretty, simple skin and her lashes were always popping. We would bronze her a little so she wasn't just one tone or surface. When she goes on *The Dick Cavett Show* or "sleeps" with Shane, you see her throw an eye or a lip on, you see her throw an eye or a lip on. She pulls from her history with makeup."

On the other end of the spectrum, Joyce's nemesis, Bridget Westbury, is a woman who found what worked for her, and she stuck to it. She reminds us of the kind of person who might shop for the same shade of lipstick at her nearby market, or she has one trusty tube rolling around in her purse.

"Bridget is a politician, and I imagine that she's used the same ten products for years. She has a professional look with the same eye and the same lip, and she doesn't get how her daughter is into more progressive looks or colors. She is a character who has probably done her makeup the same way for the last decade. Westbury is very much a Merle Norman mom."

Herbert had a lot of fun with the character of Tina, because she exudes power unlike some of the other characters. She is also one of the only Black women to work at Bottom Dollar, and she has to combat pressures unlike anyone else on the entire show. Herbert had very specific inspirations for Tina's attitude and point of view.

"Tina is very confident, and she knows enough that she can really play. She would have three of five different wigs every episode. The 70s has a lot of colors, but they can be muted. She always had her nails and her eyes down to the nines, and she would have lashes every day. Tina is always presentable. I would look at Beverly Johnson, Pam Grier, and even Diana Ross from the early part of the decade. Diana would play up her eyes in her eyeshadow. Tina was so much fun to do."

When *Minx* first debuted, it received a lot of press for how the men models disrobe. Herbert and I agreed that showing a penis is becoming more normal with mainstream storytelling, and that comes with, ahem, enormous pressures to deliver. The magazine is trying to lure in an undermarketed audience with something salacious, and Herbert knew that if the penises didn't exceed expectations, the show wouldn't work.



"I have done a lot of prosthetics. I've slit throats and made monsters, but this was nerve-wracking. The penis prosthetics have just started happening in the last couple of years with things like *Euphoria*. Our creator, Ellen Rappaport, wanted to push the envelope in a bold way. We didn't want to just see a flash of a penis. We wanted it for the whole episode or the entire season! Since penis prosthetics are becoming more prominent, every prosthetic would be made differently.

Shane's penis was a strapped belt so it was glued on the front and it strapped around. For the David model, we colored [the prosthetic] differently. The pubes were different that, obviously. They were silicone appliances, so we would glue them straight on their crotch, blend them out, and paint them. Most of the guys would tuck back. We would glue the silicone piece on top of that. In this case, the extremity would be sticking out eight or ten inches on our show. You had to create a smooth surface, and then you'd have something off the side of it so it pulls in one direction."

The biggest challenge—literally—came in the misogynistic form of Billy Brunson, a controversial, arrogant NFL star that Doug brings in to drive magazine sales. Brunson is proud of his manhood, and he insists on being fully erect for his photo shoot. The scene is uncomfortable with how Brunson can take control of the set.

"With the Billy Brunson scene, I was praying for it to stay on. Seeing that character 360 degrees was a huge challenge. Every time we did it, we did it a different way. Billy Brunson prosthetic had a plate in the back of it with an armature wire that went through it. At one point, me and Mark Nieman, who applied it with me, were tying string around it for it to stay in place. It's the most difficult prosthetic I've ever done."

With audiences becoming more comfortable, and eager, for what *Minx* can deliver, Herbert and I can only agree on one hope for season two.

"Next season—hundreds of penises!" Herbert says with a laugh.

Minx is streaming now on HBO Max.

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