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Posted: Tue., Jul. 28, 2009, 6:00pm PT

Michelle Morgan

10 Screenwriters to Watch

By [ANTHONY KAUFMAN](#)

"I never set out to write comedies," says Michelle Morgan. "Sometimes, you just end up being funny without even trying, because it's just how you see the world."

Raised in "staunchly middle class" Southern California, Morgan never felt at home in the "world of tract houses and TCBY franchises," she says. Rather, she prefers "commiserating with others" in Manhattan — the setting for her spec script "Imogene." Currently set up at Anonymous Content with Kristen Wiig, the zany, class-conscious romantic comedy is, Morgan admits, "more or less about me." In the script, even the protag discovers she's a "Playwright to Watch."

After being rejected at her top choices of UCLA and USC film schools, Morgan says she learned all she needed to know about screenwriting from Cal State Northridge professor Eric Edson. For a few years, she spent time acting — "a random departure," she calls her roles in TV's "Nancy Drew" and "American Dreams" — though rewriting her audition sides helped cultivate her voice.

When her father passed away, she devoted herself to writing. She moved in with her mother; wrote a coming-of-age drama, "Middle of Nowhere" (pic showed at the Toronto Film Festival last year); then did "Imogene" and two big comedies for Fox: an assignment titled "Is He the One?" and a remake of 1985's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun."

"Michelle has a very fresh, honest and contemporary young female voice," says Debbie Liebling, the Fox exec who hired her. "She's funny in a very natural way. Sometimes, comedy gets pushed to a place where it couldn't happen, but there's a tremendous believability to her comedy."

Indeed, even with her Hollywood breaks, Morgan is staying real. "I am still in the substitute teacher pool," she admits. "I can't take myself off that list yet. Hopefully, it'll end up working out," she says of her

screenwriting career. "But you can't take it all so seriously."

AGE: 31

HOMETOWN: Thousand Oaks, Calif.

INSPIRED BY: Early Woody Allen, Whit Stillman, F. Scott Fitzgerald. "I definitely tap into their characters, and the plight of the whiny, neurotic middle class."

UP NEXT: Writing a remake of "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" for Fox

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