

'The Bold Type' Star Melora Hardin Talks Female Empowerment, and Being a Boss

fanfest.com/2017/08/08/the-bold-type-star-melora-hardin-talks-female-empowerment-and-being-a-boss-bitch/

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August 8,
2017



The Bold Type is a refreshing, and influential new series from Freeform, following the trials and tribulations of three hard-working besties, Jane (Katie Stevens), Sutton (Meghann Fahy), and Kat (Aisha Dee), who fight vigorously to clamber their way up the career ladder at *Scarlet*, a fictional *Cosmopolitan*-like magazine in the heart of New York City. Taking on relevant, and impactful topics from a fresh angle, *The Bold Type*, and its entire ensemble will leave you awe-inspired. And even though at first glance, the show feels familiar, almost like you've seen it done a million times before, it quickly ditches the old clichés and morphs into an overall rarity. If journalism and *Sex and the City* had a baby, you'd get this show. From gender fluidity and romance, to rising above the patriarchy in the workplace, Freeform's overnight sensation does so many things right in a world of wrong.

Melora Hardin, Sam Page, Matt Ward, Aisha Dee, Meghann Fahy, and Katie Stevens in *The Bold Type* (2017) Photo by Justin Coit/Freeform

Amongst the outpouring of teamwork within *Scarlet*, *The Bold Type* is an inspiring story of women, and was modeled after real-life former *Cosmo* editor-in-chief Joanna Coles, who also happens to be an executive producer on the series. Talk about tapping into an actual industry icon. Playing the essential role of *Scarlet* boss Jacqueline Carlyle is none other than Melora Hardin (*Transparent*), but don't be fooled, Jacqueline isn't your typical *Devil Wears Prada* "boss bitch", but a woman who has invested her heart and soul, not only into the success of *Scarlet*— but those up-and-coming in an ever-changing journalism scene. As a writer myself, I found this show unequivocally relatable, and encouraging for its predominantly younger female viewers. And found myself on numerous

occasions wishing for a dream boss like Hardin's character.

Hardin spoke extensively with me about the importance of a show like this in 2017, as well as painted an idyllic picture of the future of feminism. She even shared an eye-opening story of how rivalry in the workplace left her 17-year-old self fired from a starring role in the worldwide cultural phenomenon, *Back to the Future*. From glitz and glam, to spending time with her family, Hardin talks about what really matters to her in this cutthroat, and unapologetic industry.

Gather around all you **Bold Types**, this is one interview you're not going to want to miss!

MCKENZIE MORRELL: Hey Melora! Thank you for speaking with me today. I'm real excited to talk about *The Bold Type*. I know you're a busy woman. So let's get started.

MELORA HARDIN: Yes.

MM: Can you tell the readers what the show is about and just a little bit about the character that you're playing?

MH: The show is inspired by the ex-Cosmopolitan Editor in Chief, Joanna Coles, who's one of our Executive Producers who is now the Chief Content Officer at Hearst [Magazines]. The show revolves around three young women who are working at Scarlet Magazine, which is a Cosmo-type magazine. It features empowering women, sex, relationships, workplace conversations, fashion and beauty and all other things in the magazine.

MM: And your character, Jacqueline?

MH: I'm the Editor-In-Chief of the magazine, and I think she's a very empowering boss, not a *Devil Wears Prada* kind of boss. She's much more realistic, she thinks of what real women of power are like in today's world. Just much more collaborative, empowering, nurturing, setting a high bar for her employees and expecting them to reach outside their comfort zone and pushing them, but not doing it in a mean or manipulative or deceptive way. You don't have to like her but she's really going to make you your best at what you do, she has integrity, and she's decent. That's the main reason I accepted the role because I really felt like that was very, very important and I wasn't comfortable with the idea of it just being a flat character. I really wanted her to be three dimensional, which I think she is.

MM: Oh, she definitely is. It has to be exciting having Joanna at your fingertips, she's the Executive Producer of this series, and sort of your muse for your character. Do you get to collaborate with her at all, if you're covering things that might have been something she went through?

MH: Oh yeah. We spent quite a bit of time together in the workplace, also socially. I've been able to observe her and I've called her a couple of times to say "Is this something you would say?" or "how would you say this" or "what do you think, does this sound right to you?" And she's reading all the scripts and definitely on that as well. We're definitely in collaboration about all those things.

MM: And the beauty of your character is that it kind of mirrors your own life a little bit. I mean you've had a successful career, with a supportive family and a husband, who's on the show as well, and you juggle all of that. Do you have any tips for women out there who are trying to succeed in the workplace all while maintaining that balance in their family life?

MH: Yeah, I think first of all I would say – get a really great life coach or a really great therapist. I don't understand why people don't do that. I feel like we go get our teeth cleaned twice a year, we take our car in for oil changes, we, ya know, work out at the gym, but everybody ends up thinking that they could just do everything. I really am a full believer in creating a team around you, a team of people. Your friends are included in that, your husband or your wife is included in that, but I feel like we need that person who can be that objective voice, that perspective that is not all wrapped up inside of it and inside of your life. It's not really quantity of time of time that you're spending with your family, it is absolutely quality of time.

MM: I completely agree with that.

MH: You can be focused on where you are. If you're at work, be at work, if you're at home, be at home. Turn the screens off in the house, put your phone down. Don't be texting and emailing and being pulled and distracted. Stay with each other and take the time to be really connected. Eat dinners together and talk about the day. Ask questions of your kids, let your kids ask questions of you. I think that's really, really important, to just really be where you are, don't be half where you are. I think the people that struggle are the people that are half where they are and I think that sometimes you're in one place and then you get pulled somewhere else. But that's the exception more than the rule, and I think most women are learning how to have both things.

MM: Have you been able to learn from those around you?

MH: The women I know in power are women who are learning to balance as well, who are learning to stay really focused. They have an amazing support system around them which includes really great friends and family and support whether it's an amazing babysitter or nanny or some incredible day-care that they love. I feel like you have to search out what works best for your family. For me, I didn't have fancy schmancy nannies. I had young girls who were young actors who would come here and take care of my kids when they were little and when they had an audition I would make sure that they could go to it and I would work it out. Whether the kids were coming with me or they would drop them off with me and come back and get them. I think that there are many, many ways to skin a cat so I would encourage people to be creative and to make it work for them and their system.

MM: Great advice. We're all focused on multitasking and this art of perfecting it, that we don't stop to enjoy life. Unrelated... there was a moment where Jaqueline was talking about "oh that's possible" when the girls were trying to figure out if a sex position was doable. I thought that was really hilarious and kind of subtly told us a little bit more about your character. Will we see more moments like that, uncovering who she is maybe outside of work?

MH: Yes. Yes. You will get that. You'll get little bits and bobs of that and then you will see her a little bit outside of work at one point as well. You get a little bit inside her life and her character outside of work. But, it's definitely going to be little bits and bobs [laughs]. You don't get the full scoop this season but you will certainly get more and I think by the end of the season you'll feel like "WOW, ok, wow...WOW...oh wow...Okay..." [laughs].



Melora Hardin, Aisha Dee. Photo by Phillippe Bosse/Freeform

MM: And I think that's the beauty of it. To kind of slowly peel off the layers. If you get it all at once, it's like alright I have it now and I'm just kinda done with it. I think it's good that we are going to get little pieces of her as we go along.

MH: Yeah and I think as you do you get more and more impressed with how she's managed to take care of herself. You have to take care of yourself in order to become the kind of person that you want to be for others. And so you get to really see her do that.

MM: Right. And she is obviously taking care of the girls as well at work. We recently saw Kat go through an unfortunate run-in on the internet and Jacqueline was there to kind of support her. What role do you think having a role model plays in shaping someone's career?

MH: I think everyone needs mentors and I think that Jacqueline is more than a boss. She's a mentor. I think anyone who's gotten anywhere will tell you this person was a mentor for me, this person encouraged me in a way that other people didn't. You'll hear people talking about teachers at school or a parent or a sibling or a friend, or a boss. I think that is really important. It's important for people to see that it's necessary, that we can't really achieve anything on an island. There's a reason people used to raise children in villages. There's a reason for that saying "it takes a village..." because everything *does* take a village. Our world is becoming so diverse and so large. The amount

of people on this Earth is extraordinary. It's not anymore like anyone really has a starring role. Everyone has to be more of an ensemble. Everyone has to work as a team. It's the way things are going. It's the way the world is going and I think in order to keep the world a beautiful place, which it is, we're going to have to work better and even more as a team. We're certainly seeing that in our political system that it doesn't work when people can't talk and when they can't collaborate. It just doesn't work, nothing gets done [laughs].

MM: [Laughs] No it does not. Obviously internet trolls are sometimes the worst especially if you're on the receiving end. How do you in your personal life handle any negative comments that you might see on Twitter. Have you ever found yourself kind of wanting to engage even though you knew you shouldn't?

MH: You know, it's hard enough for me to even get on Twitter or Instagram. I have so much going on in my real life that I have to consciously remind myself to do a tweet. I actually particularly like it when someone asks me to tweet something for them because I like to help people as much as I can and I'm happy to support this or that project if I believe in it and think that it's good with the person that I think is doing things for the right reasons. I do my best to do that but at the same time, I don't really know how to engage much on Twitter. So I don't know that I see anything. I'm sure people are saying things that are not nice about me but I don't see them. [Laughs]

MM: That's the beauty of it, right? People always have something negative to say no matter what, even if it's warranted or not. They just want to talk into the abyss.

MH: Yeah. It's fine. Look, it's a free country. That's one of the greatest things about our country, you're allowed the freedom of speech to say what you want, feel how you want. I certainly say what I want. Feel how I want. So it's okay with me if you disagree with me. I still am going to try to speak passionately about what I believe in because I feel like that's sort of the only thing I can do being a creative person is I have to be creative.



Photo Credit: Freeform/John Medland

MM: Yes you do and what I love about your character is that she's tough on the girls and pushes them but she also sincerely wants to see them thrive. Do you think in 2017, we have more of that women kind of rooting for other women?

MH: I really do. I really, really do. I was originally chosen to be in *Back To The Future*, there was another actor that was supposed to be playing McFly and then when they recast that character for Michael J. Fox, I was actually fired because I was too tall for Michael J. Fox and I always thought that was Robert Zemeckis and Bob Gale's duty to call me at home when I was 17 years old and tell me that it had nothing to do with me, that it was just that I was too tall. Just last year somebody was writing a book about *Back To The Future* and they wanted to interview me and they called me and they said they've done extensive interviews with everybody and I was the last interview for the book and they said "I don't know if you ever knew this but Bob Gale and Bob Zemeckis had no trouble with you being taller than Michael J. Fox, in fact they thought it was kind of cute. It was actually the female Executive that thought that it disempowered their male lead to have a girlfriend that was taller than him".

MM: No freaking way!

MH: Now that was shocking to me and it was not only shocking but it was really telling because that would have been around 1985. We have come a long way, baby! I cannot think of one female executive that would even say something like that in 2017.

MM: Not a chance, hopefully.

MH: I think we have come a long way and that we are just getting this idea that the reason that the patriarchy has risen is because they're so good at slapping each other on the back, ya know, go for it dude, keep on going, if you fail just get right back up and get back on that horse and go for it. Really like the Boys Club of being there for each other, whereas women felt like they had to fight for that one slot that was open to them. Even now, you're a successful company if you have 30% female. Well that's not representative of our culture. Our culture is 52% female. I think that's going to shift and it's going to be more like you're a successful company if you have a 50/50 ratio, which is really the way it should be. I feel like we're going in a great direction. I feel like shows like *The Bold Type* are helping with that. I'd like to think that my character is helping with that, showing an example of that. Being that mirror for the young women who are going towards being a boss of their own or having a boss that they believe in that can have integrity and be kind because there is no reason not to be kind and to be grateful. So, yeah, I'm excited about where women are going. I have two daughters that I'm raising and I feel good about it. I feel good that they are walking into a different, more expansive environment and I'm certainly trying to do my part of showing them what it looks like to be doing everything you want to do and doing it well and then letting the other things fall to the wayside because you have to focus. You've got to focus good and hard on the things you want.

MM: Yes, you do. Well, you're doing a great job. This show has been getting such rave reviews for everything that it's tackling so I think that we're on the right track and I'm excited to see what's to come on the series, for sure.

MH: Yes, it'll be fun. You'll enjoy it.

MM: I like to throw a curveball into all of my interviews. Are you ready for it?

MH: Sure!

MM: Alright. So now if your character on *The Bold Type* were a donut, based on her personality, what kind of donut would it be?

MH: Um.....hmmm....

MM: And you can put toppings on it, whatever you'd like!

MH: Right. I think she would definitely be a classic glazed donut that would have lots of very colorful toppings. So like chocolate sauce and colored sprinkles and she might have a filling. She might have some kind of a filling too, I guess, because there's a lot going on with her under the surface as well as on the surface. She's a very pretty donut for sure [*laughs*]. Lots of pretty things and then inside maybe there's a surprising stuffing, like a surprising center. Maybe not the typical raspberry but maybe something like blueberry fig or something like that. [*Laughs*] or passionfruit mango.

MM: I'm kinda hungry, it's lunchtime. [*Laughs*] Oh, that'd be interesting. I'm sure that *The Bold Type* keeps you pretty busy but are there any other projects coming up that you'd like to mention before we conclude?

MH: Well, I'm directing and also in a documentary that I don't quite know what it's going to be called yet. That's something we can talk about later.

MM: Yes we can.

MH: I'm very excited about that. There's also a movie that I'm trying to get off the ground that I'll be directing so we can also talk about that when that gets the greenlight! I'm very excited about both of those.

MM: That's amazing. Well we can't wait. I'm a huge fan. I can't wait to see what's next for you. I want to thank you again for taking the time to speak with me today.

MH: Awww. Thank you so much. It was fun! Have a great day!

MM: You too!

The Bold Type airs Tuesdays at 9/8c on Freeform.
