

Charity and
LeToya:
Successful Sisters
Sharing the
Spotlight

By Nicole Holman

Ladies, we have waited long enough! Gather your girls, pour your glasses of wine and get comfy. It's a new year and an all-new sexy season of our favorite scripted series on VH1, *Single Ladies*! Keisha (Lisa Raye McCoy), Racquel (Denise Vasi), and April (Charity Shea) are back to give us all the juice and drama until our heart's content, but this season also introduces a few new characters to give their storylines a twist. R&B superstar turned actress, LeToya Luckett joins the cast as Felicia Price, a music industry empress who runs the business and her company, Price Management, with an iron stiletto. Felicia crosses paths with Charity Shea's character, April in the season's opening episode and suddenly April becomes a little less worried about her next boo and more concerned about her next career move. The relationship between the two emulates the dynamic between Andy and Miranda Priestley from the movie, *The Devil Wears Prada*, so we had to get the scoop from LeToya and Charity themselves on coming together, ebony and ivory, strutting into the spotlight.

On Getting Into Character

After what had seemed to be like years of waiting, Charity was relieved to hear that her show was green lit for another season. It was time to take her character, April, to the next level. Before filming, she remembers receiving the script, sitting in her trailer on set in Atlanta and envisioning what Felicia Price would be like.

"I pictured LeToya's character as like this really mean, older woman, very sophisticated," says Charity. "And when LeToya came to set it was like, 'Wait a minute, she's not like this mean older woman!' She would get right into character and her silence is kind of what makes her so scary, because her looks will kill. She was actually kind of intimidating! It was a lot of fun. She was great!"

"Was I *that* mean?!" exclaims LeToya over laughs. "Felicia...sometimes she can be a little misunderstood if you will. She doesn't come off as the nicest person when you meet her, so for that I definitely went into my '*Devil Wears Prada*', Meryl Streep bag and tried to put my little spin on it."

If you saw the premiere episode earlier this month, then you witnessed LeToya portraying the ice queen so perfectly, you may have forgotten about her bright, bubbly and infectious personality in real life.

"I'm goofy at heart and everybody knows that. I love to laugh and I'm the complete opposite of Felicia," she says. "Charity and I would be cool and chatting it up while on set but as soon as the director would say 'action' I would get into character and Charity would laugh and the producers would laugh too and say, 'Whoa...you flipped that switch so fast!' (Laughs.) It's crazy. It was a lot of fun and Charity is a great person and she's a joy to work with."

The only similarity between LeToya and Felicia may be their undeniable work ethic. She auditioned for the role three times before landing the spot on the show, and she works even harder to perfect her character. Although LeToya says that she's nothing like Felicia in real life, she respects her hustle. With the media's recent obsession with

female empowerment and modern feminism debates, Charity and LeToya both agree that their characters are setting a perfect example for women in 2014.

“I don’t feel that Felicia’s personality is anything close to my personality but I do love her drive,” explains LeToya. “A lot of times, women in power can be misunderstood because they’re not softies by any means. You definitely have to have a certain type of attitude to achieve what she’s achieved. Nothing personal to those who meet her, but that’s just how she is.”

Whether it’s fulfilling the outrageous requests of her boss or refusing to back down from the challenges by her colleague, David Berenger (played by Damien Wayans), Charity admires April’s ambition and optimism. “She to me is sunshine and she’s happy even when things are bad,” says the actress. “I always think that in every character you’re going to bring an element of you to that character. There are pieces of her that are like me, but then, also what’s fun is, when I get the nails done, the hair, and the heels and everything, I become her. It’s just fun to jump into someone else’s body!”

Charity describes being on set as every girl’s dream. There’s an endless selection of shoes and outfits, hair stylists and makeup and nail artists waiting at your hand and foot. In addition to the drama of the show, we love watching to see what the girls are wearing next! The show’s stylist, former *Project Runway* contestant, Anthony Williams, ensures that each single lady’s personality is represented through her style. Charity prefers to rock a black studded leather jacket and her natural brunette locks while April may opt for a bright yellow suit to match her sunny personality. While LeToya may indulge in timeless Chanel pieces like her character, unlike Felicia she isn’t afraid to have fun and add some variety and color to her wardrobe. Although Felicia considers herself to be chic and fashionable, the diva only wears two colors: black and white, and red on special occasions. “It was kind of fun to see Anthony put together these beautiful black pieces and none of them were alike!” says LeToya. “It’s hard to wear black everyday and look completely different.”

On Bonding On and Off Set

For Charity, this season of *Single Ladies* has been the best one yet, not only regarding the evolution of her character, but also because of the cast bonding. Trips to the movies, late nights at the club and friendly gatherings over food and drinks at her apartment were very common. She lived in the same building as her co-star Denise Vasi, who she says she instantly became best friends with. Their boyfriends also formed a bromance, and Charity even attended Denise’s wedding last summer at a vineyard in California. She described the ceremony as “very simplistic and beautiful with quality taste.”

Perhaps her most surprising bond was with comedian and actor, Damien Wayans who plays April’s love interest on the show, David. The two are very competitive for Felicia’s approval and often attempt to one up each other. However, they also have an irrefutable chemistry and attraction for one another they both try to use to their own advantage. Charity dishes on what it was like to film love scenes with the Damien while trying to hold back laughter.

“I would be laughing because April and David, they don’t have the slow sexy scenes. They’re not trying to get with each other, it’s like an accident,” says Charity while chuckling uncontrollably. “He kept telling me ‘Charity stop laughing!’ Working with him is so funny so it was hard for me to keep a straight face.”

She went on to say, “I remember the very first day I had to work with him, and our very first scene was a massive love scene. I was so nervous because I hadn’t worked in awhile because our show took a while to come back, and the first thing up was a love scene with him. I was so nervous sitting in my trailer! But immediately when I met him he was like ‘What’s up girl!’ and he was being himself and made me feel very comfortable. He would say really funny, cheesy, corny things to make me laugh to break the ice. It’s great when you find a love interest that makes you feel so comfortable. It makes the rest of the season a breeze. Damien is a star and the fact that I got to work with him, I feel honored.”

When we asked LeToya if Felicia had any steamy love scenes during the season she replied, “Oh you gotta watch and find that out honey! I can’t give you all the secrets!” However, LeToya says she felt like she adopted a second family with the entire cast specifically with co-star Lesley-Ann Brandt who portrays, Naomi Cox, a mysterious woman on the quest to break up Keisha and Malcolm’s happy home. “We don’t really have any scenes together, but me and Lesley became like best friends, that is my girl! She is about to leave her footprint on this industry. She’s also an amazing person with such a great heart. She’s such a giver!”

LeToya On Her Music Career

Although we’re excited to see our girl LeToya on the small screen, we’re ecstatic to hear her back on our radios and iPods. Musically, she has been a little bit under the radar, but that’s because she’s been busy balancing her new role on *Single Ladies*, her hosting gig on BET Centric’s, *CultureList*, and more acting projects she has coming this year. Nonetheless, the R&B songstress from Houston wants us all to know that the release of her next album is swiftly approaching and remains on the top of her to do list. Her first, self-titled album went platinum and her last album, *Lady Love*, debuted at number one on Billboard’s Top R&B/Hip Hop Album chart. With the pulse of R&B on the rise, she is sure to reach new heights. She’s been working with producers and writers such as Harmony Samuels who has generated hits for Keyshia Cole, Sevyn Streeter, Fantasia and Kelly Rowland. So what can we expect to hear on this new album?

“Well, a different Toya! All my friends that have come to the studio were like, ‘Yo this is very different for you!’” says the R&B Star. “I wanted to make sure that when people listen to it, that’s what they took from it because I’ve grown a lot as a person and as an artist. I’ve been through a lot since my last album and have learned a lot of life’s lessons. I think with this with album, one-it’s important to show growth and two-I want to be open. I want to people to walk away from this saying, ‘Man I can relate to her, she went through the same thing that I went through!’ I think that’s important when you’re creating because you’re sharing your testimony with people.”

The star has come a long way since her Destiny's Child days. Although years have gone by since the group's disbandment, LeToya says that there is no beef between any of the members. She has recently seen new moms, Latavia and Beyonce, and says they were the happiest she has ever seen them. LeToya also has a great friendship with Michelle Williams, which may be strange to some, but they don't seem to think so. "She's such a sweetie pie and she has such a good heart! She's a genuine person and she's hilarious! You talk about the two goofballs of the group? It's me and her all day!" laughs LeToya. "We are like the two bad church women with the church fans cracking up on everything and that's how we are. It's kind of crazy that I kinda met my match with Michelle. She's a sweetie and we love to eat, child!" She went on to say, "I feel like all of us seem to have a very humble spirit. You can be the best at what you do without stepping on each other's feet!"

Charity On Making It to Hollywood

In her hometown of Denver, Colorado, Charity grew up participating in talent shows, modeling and school plays. She always knew from the very beginning that acting was her calling. One day, she packed up her things and left for Los Angeles in a Uhaul truck and never looked back. "When I got here, I realized it was a lot harder than I thought it was going to be, obviously it has to be because everybody wants to be an actress," explains Charity. "It's a lot of work, very draining. You have to have very good self-esteem. It's tough and some people get lucky and it's very few and far between. You learn to respect the business a lot and if you if you get a job you're grateful. And I like it that way because it's a challenge and when you get something it means something." Charity aspires to have big screen roles in action and horror films, but for now she loves portraying her character April and acting in indie films. She currently resides in Los Angeles with her boyfriend and her pets.

What LeToya Wants The World To Know

When she's not practicing her lines or working on her next studio album, LeToya loves to go to the movies, take her grandmother to the butterfly museum, or go shopping. She proclaims herself to be a shopaholic. To make room in her closet, she sells her gently worn clothing items at an online consignment shop called Catch22boutique.com. There you can find her personal closet called the "Toy Box."

With all that she's been through and all that she's accomplished, LeToya wants the world to know that she is a fighter and that giving up for her is never an option. "I feel like I'm definitely a person that doesn't stop. Things may happen in life, but I've always been more into trying to see the good in every situation," explains the star. "A lot of people may not know that because I'm always kidding around and having fun. I think that's what you should do. Every minute of your life should be enjoyed."