

ON STAGE

RACHEL BAILIT is an East coast girl to the core. Born and raised in Massachusetts, she relocated to LA after college to pursue her life-long dream of becoming an actress. That dream quickly evolved into her very own one-woman show, called “Sugar Happens,” the story of a nice, Jewish girl from New England trying to make it in Hollywood. Now, after five years of performances on the West coast, Bailit is due east again, but this time, her sights are set on New York. — *Rachel Bowie*

New York Resident: What initially inspired your move to the West coast?

Rachel Bailit: It wasn't logical. Ever since I was tiny little girl, I always knew I was going to be an actress. In college, I was studying to be a broadcast journalist. During my senior year, I randomly signed up to take an acting course for non-majors. On the very first day, the professor made the entire class get down on all fours and pretend to be animals. As silly as it sounds, all I could think was, ‘Yes! This is it!’ I did a total 180 from my original plans, followed my instincts and moved to LA.

NYR: How did your plans to pursue acting evolve into your one-woman show, “Sugar Happens”?

RB: In 2004, I was pitching a TV show to a producer at Sony. He wasn't interested in the show, but said, ‘I'm really interested in you. I think you should get on stage and do stand up.’ I kept saying, ‘But I'm not a comedian. I'm an actress!’ Eventually, I agreed to his idea. He introduced me to Sherry Coben, a writer he had worked with for one of his TV shows. Sherry and I met and immediately clicked. She decided that I had an interesting story and agreed to write what I thought was going to be a comedy act. After several months of working together, she presented me with quite the opposite: a one-woman show!

NYR: What was the process like getting the show up and running in LA?

RB: I was studying at the Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute at the time. David Strasberg, Lee Strasberg's son, runs the school and was teaching my class. I got this idea to ask David to direct the piece and, to my great surprise, he said yes. His only condition was that he wanted to workshop the piece for a while. In the beginning, it was only supposed to be a three-night workshop, but that quickly changed. The first night went exceptionally well, and on the second night, David surprised me and brought Al Pacino to see the show!

NYR: Now, after performing the show for over four years in LA, your plan is to bring it to New York...

RB: Yes! All sights are set on New York. It's pretty clear to me now that my goals have changed. It's not about staying in LA and doing TV and film anymore. Out in LA, I've had the chance to work with some major directors like Ron Howard and Henry Jaglom — lots and lots of really great people. But something inside is telling me, just like it did before, it's time to make a move. It's time to go to New York.

NYR: You've performed the show a few times already for a New York audience. What has the feedback been like?



RB: The response has been extremely positive. I'm an East coast girl, my writer is from New York, and I think it's a very intelligent play. The show is about life and hope and about the different decisions we make that change our lives. I think it's a very universal play. I've had a couple of heavy hitters in New York come and see it and they say they've never seen anything like it before.

NYR: When you look back over the last five years since you first started performing the show, what have you learned?

RB: When I first moved to LA, I was so focused on some esoteric dream of making it in Hollywood. Now, that dream has become a very specific, demanding, rigorous job, that is certainly very rewarding, but is deeply rooted in how the show goes each time I perform it. Before, I was a walking headshot, swimming with the masses. “Sugar Happens” has provided me with the opportunity to pull myself out and say, ‘Hey! Please recognize me, see what I'm doing!’ — not for the vanity side of it, but to really be able to make a statement with what I do.

NYR: How has the show changed over the last five years?

RB: It really took about four years for this whole thing to come together to the place where we're happy. I mean, we're constantly making changes to it because we want it sharper, better, funnier, more poignant. It's been this ever-evolving journey and I think it's ready for New York.

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