

In the room with writer Christine Zander

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The second annual [Toronto Screenwriting Conference](#) runs at Ryerson University's Ted Rogers School of Management April 9th & 10th.

All this week, *Playback* will feature Q&As with some of the all-star cast of writers leading the Conference, including writer/producer/director Pen Densham (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*), animation writer Butch Hartman (*The Fairly Oddparents*), gaming scribe Kevin Shortt (*Avatar: The Game*), and this week, we have comedy writer/executive producer Christine Zander (*Nurse Jackie*).

A Q&A with Christine Zander

Christine began her career writing for *Saturday Night Live* and stayed there for seven seasons. She has been a writer and producer on several top comedies over the last two decades, including six years on the award-winning series *3rd Rock From The Sun*, and later *Less Than Perfect* and *Samantha Who*?

Zander was also the co-executive producer of the first two seasons of Emmy and Golden Globe Award-nominated series *Nurse Jackie*. Currently she is co-executive producing the second season of *Raising Hope*. Christine will kick off the Toronto Screenwriting Conference with a Marquee session on Writing for Cable & Network Series moderated by Rob Sheridan, co-exec producer of *Mad Love*.

What was your first writing project for which you were both credited and paid?

Saturday Night Live. The first actual sketch I got on air was about three months after I started. Bill Murray played "Bart" – a nightmare of a one-night stand.

Did anyone give you words of advice when you started out?

When I had my baby, three years in at *SNL* I was horribly guilty about working so much. Al Franken said, “Chris, when he grows up and can watch reruns, he’s gonna think you’re the coolest mom in the world.” Turned out to be true.

How has the writer’s room changed since you started working on your first series?

The writer’s room hasn’t changed except for the fact that there are more high level writers available because of fewer comedies on the air and the development process has over the years become more micro-managed by the studios and networks.

Do you have a favorite line you wrote? What was it & who said it?

I did a pilot for the American version of *Absolutely Fabulous* and the character of Eddie, played by the actress Kathryn Hahn, felt she and her best friend Patsy were about to fail miserably at their attempt to stay current and hot. She said: “We’ve lost our shuuz! We’ll never be in *Vuue*.” (*Vuue* was the name of a magazine that was supposed to be *Vogue* but of course we couldn’t clear it for use.)

What has been your biggest challenge in your career?

Finding “the funny” no matter how bad you hurt.

Read more: <http://playbackonline.ca/2011/04/06/in-the-room-with-writer-christine-zander/#ixzz1IIC8MW2O>