

# YOU BETCHA

Three young alums oversee a multimedia empire—unapologetically cheeky and occasionally profane—aimed at millennial women



## GENERATION Y

(from left): Samantha Fishbein '11, Jordana Abraham '11, BS '10, and Aleen Kuperman '12, BS '11, at the Betches offices in Manhattan

**W**hen three Cornellians—Jordana Abraham '11, BS '10, Samantha Fishbein '11, and Aleen Kuperman '12, BS '11—started a blog as undergrads, they were just looking for a fun way to satirize college life and speak their minds online. To their surprise, the snarky posts poking fun at dating, dieting, and drinking—complete with F-bombs and self-deprecating humor—struck a chord with other millennial women nationwide. “We thought we were writing about our own small bubble, but it turned out other people really related to it,” says Kuperman. Adds Abraham: “We tried to say what people are thinking, but not saying out loud.”

When their musings went viral, it launched the trio on an unexpected career path. Since leaving the Hill, Abraham, Fishbein, and Kuperman have transformed that blog into a thriving multimedia brand called Betches Media—their take on a similar five-letter word. The name, they say, represents a community of confident young women, not necessarily a squad of mean girls (although, as the many postings on Betches’ social

media reveal, the trio and their fans sure do love that Lindsay Lohan movie).

Named to *Forbes*’s “30 Under 30” list earlier this year, the three now oversee a digital enterprise that boasts more than 6.5 million Instagram followers and major brand partners like

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Netflix and MTV. They’ve authored two humorous, *New York Times* bestselling self-help books and describe their third (*When’s Happy Hour? Work Hard So You Can Hardly Work*, published in October 2018) as “a guide on how to thrive professionally, get ahead at your job, and basically become the Beyoncé of whatever you aspire to do.” They produce a website and a network of podcasts, run an e-commerce shop (get your “Alexa, Buy More Wine” glasses here), and recently launched a dating app. All the ventures share the same irreverent tone. For instance, when President Trump’s former lawyer Michael Cohen testified before ▶



the House Oversight Committee in March, a Betches post called it “so cataclysmically insane that I am going to begin day drinking.” Says Fishbein: “We’re not afraid to share a strong opinion.”

With nineteen full-time employees, the Betches team works out of a stylish, pink-accented office in Manhattan’s Flatiron District, where the co-founders met with CAM in early February. The décor reflects the brand, with framed photos of their favorite memes and wall art that proclaims pop culture catchphrases like the Kardashian-inspired “You’re Doing Amazing, Sweetie.” On this day, they’re excited to talk about the three sold-out shows they held the previous week in Brooklyn, Philadelphia,

and Washington, D.C., which were recorded for their popular “U Up?” podcast about relationships that’s hosted by Abraham and comedian Jared Freid. “That podcast gets thousands of e-mails with people asking questions,” says Abraham. “We discuss very modern dating issues, like, ‘Why isn’t he answering my texts, but he’s looking at my Instagram stories?’ Dating is so different than it used to be. It can be hard to navigate.”

The co-founders say expanding into podcasts—with topics ranging from recaps of “The Bachelor” to weight loss and wellness—was a natural move, since research shows that millennial women are driving much of that platform’s growth. The popularity of “U Up?” also inspired the idea for Ship, a dating app unveiled earlier this year in collaboration with the firm that operates Match.com, Tinder, and OkCupid. Putting a spin on traditional online dating approaches, Ship lets users’ friends play matchmaker. “We wanted it to mimic a night going out with your friends to a bar,” says Abraham, “where if you meet someone, that’s great, but if not, you’re still having a good time.”

Abraham, Fishbein, and Kuperman have been friends since childhood, growing up in the same Long Island town (Roslyn) and attending the same high school. At Cornell, they joined Alpha Epsilon Phi and later shared a Collegetown apartment. As undergrads, they had different plans for their future careers: Abraham studied policy analysis and management in Human Ecology,

**GEAR UP:** Products available from the Betches online store include (clockwise from right) wine glasses, greeting cards, T-shirts, and phone cases. Top: Their three lifestyle books.



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Fishbein was in the ILR school, and Kuperman was pre-med in CALS. But when their blog caught the attention of a TV producer and book agent, they decided to move back in with their parents after graduation and develop the Betches brand. “We knew there was something there,” says Fishbein. “It was just a question of what it would become.” They each invested \$1,500 and bootstrapped the company from there; they’ve maintained sole ownership, and *Forbes* estimates that in 2017 Betches exceeded \$5 million in revenue. “None of us were business majors, and sometimes that was hard on us,” says Kuperman. “But at some point we said, ‘Let’s just use our intuition.’”

These days, they’re tackling more grown-up topics—though in a typically lighthearted way. During the midterm elections last fall, Betches Media teamed up with New Balance and Rock the Vote to send a party bus around NYC to offer rides to the polls. The company has introduced a politics and news hub (called “The SUP”) and sends out a daily current events newsletter via e-mail. As the site’s online description puts it: “Keep up with WTF is going on in the world . . . Uninformed is no longer cute, and sometimes you just need for your funny informed friend to explain what’s going on to you (that’s us, duh).” More live events are planned, and an animated TV series based on the Betches brand is in development at Comedy Central. “It’s been like a roller coaster for us,” Kuperman says of the Betches’ journey, “but it’s been really exciting—and we get to do it together.” ■

— Heather Salerno