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the apple of apple's eye: ellen feiss

her pc crashed, she made the switch, and now she's famous. meet the internet's latest it girl.

By Zachary Frechette

Ellen Feiss is a lot like most 15-year-olds, with one notable exception: Some guy in Holland is wearing a T-shirt with her face on it right now. Actually, a lot of people are wearing that shirt with her picture or drinking coffee from a similarly themed mug purchased on one of Ellen's numerous fan sites. After appearing in a "Switch" ad for Apple computer (www.apple.com/switch/ads), Feiss quickly became an Internet celebrity, spawning stories in newspapers from coast to coast and sparking discussion in chat rooms across the world. There was even a look-alike contest held outside Amsterdam, although most of the entrants were men. Some have argued she seems a bit too, um, light-headed in her commercial, but that hasn't stopped Leno and Letterman from trying to book her (actually, it probably helped). As a sophomore in high school, Ellen still isn't quite sure what to make of her 15 minutes, but between meetings with her agent and MTV executives, she took some time to answer questions for Post-

How did you get involved with the Apple switch campaign in the first place?

It's kind of a funny story. I'm friends with the son of the director, Errol Morris. I'm friends with his son Hamilton. I went with him after

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school, him and two of my friends. We didn't think we were going to make ads; we were just going to get the free set food. So we go there, and they're like, "We need a couple more people, so I guess the three of you can make ads." So we all made ads, and me and Hamilton's got picked. I had no idea I was going to do it until I got there.

Is the story you told true?

Oh yeah, it's definitely true.

What was the paper about?

It was about Chinatown, and the formation of Chinatowns in America. I lost like three pages of it; it was terrible. It was a really, really good paper.

Did Apple compensate you for the commercial at all?

I'm not actually sure how much I got paid because it was in installments, and the whole contract was dealt with by my parents, so I'm not actually sure. Oh, and I got an iPod. It's like the coolest thing ever.

What was the initial response of your friends and family to the commercial?

They all freaked out. I called my dad while I was at the set because I had to get him to say that he was my guardian and it was OK for me to do it, and he didn't believe me that I was going to do it. So they all freaked out when they found out I got the ad.

Did you get a lot of phone calls after it aired?

Yeah, a lot of old camp friends, actually.

When did you start getting the sense you were becoming a celebrity beyond the commercial itself?

I was on vacation in Arizona this summer, and when I left everything was fine. It was kind of like, "Oh this is cool, I'm in a commercial," but that's it. And so we left. When we get back two weeks later, it's like a bombard, it was so big. I have like 20 messages on the answering machine from different people telling me about this, random people like people who work with my parents and all these other people. I get back and I'm in The New York Times, and I'm

in the L.A. Times, and Letterman wants me on his show, Leno wants me on his show. I'm like, "I just got back from vacation!" It's funny because I get back, and the New York Times is like, "Ellen is unreachable for comment because she's supposedly on vacation," and I was like, "How do they even know this?" It was really kind of scary, actually, a little overwhelming at first.

So do you have any interest in doing Leno or Letterman?

I was offered to, but I decided not to because I thought it wouldn't be so much "Who are you, Ellen Feiss?" It would be more like, "Are you a stoner?" blah blah blah. I did get other offers besides that that I'm getting into. MTV wants to talk to me. They're doing a pilot on me. The guy's going to come to my house in two weeks and interview me, and then show it to the CEO of MTV. I got a lot of crazy offers. I thought if I went on Letterman, it would be like I go on Letterman, and then I go on "Regis and Kelly," and then I go on Channel 5 News, and then it would kind of fizzle out pathetically. MTV's a little cooler.

Any idea what the MTV show would be about?

No, he has no idea. He just said he liked the ads and said I was a cute kid.

Do you think this has the potential to jump-start a career in entertainment?

I don't know. I also got a call from the Farrelly Brothers. They were like, "You know we really like your ad," so they wrote down my name or something. I have an agent now. This guy writes me down — the producer of all the Farrelly brothers movies — and he's like this kid is whatever whatever, this ad is pretty funny, so he writes my name down and he's trying to get in contact with my agent. Since I didn't have an agent at that point ... well it's a kind of confusing story, but anyway, they wanted me to be in one of their movies, but since they found out how old I was they don't think I can be in one. Supposedly, though, my agent is "floating my image," quote unquote. I don't know what the hell that means.

So have you made a bunch of new friends at school?

No, it isn't that weird. I get a lot of really obvious comments from people like "Did you know that there are mugs with your face on them?" and I'm like, "No I didn't; why don't you tell me about that?" Just comments like that. It's like, "Thanks for telling me about that."

Are you OK with all the Web sites, and people walking around wearing your face on their T-shirts?

Oh, whatever, I think it's kind of funny. These people don't have lives. I don't know, it was kind of bizarre at first. I went to my Web site but I decided not to read any of the comments because I thought it would be too weird. I heard about some of them, though, so I was like, "Weeell, I'm not going to read those."

Did you hear about the look-alike contest in Holland?

I did! I saw the pictures, too. It was really funny.

Did you have a favorite picture?

The toothless old man was hands down the best, but no one actually looked anything like me.

Has Apple tried to contact you since all this happened?

They contacted me to supposedly advise me. They were like, "We don't really want you to take this anywhere," but I decided to get an agent anyway. I went to Macworld in July. It seems like the kind of thing where if you're not in the biz I thought it was the most boring thing. I got shuttled down to New York, and I got VIP seating, and I was like, "Wow, I'm at the Oscars or something," but then I was like, "No, I'm at Macworld." I met Steve Jobs. He called me by my first name — clever, huh? It was brief.

Do you have a favorite switch ad besides your own?

Probably Hamilton, just because I know him, and I saw him make it. It was so funny. Me and Hamilton have decided that our new nemesis is

Jeremiah Cohick. He's our age, and he's trying to steal our limelight! We decided we don't like him. We're out to get him.

Does it bother you at all that some of your fame might be related to your perceived state of sobriety in the commercial?

It doesn't really bother me. I do admit to looking pretty out of it in that commercial — I think I look horrible. It was after school, but I was the last person to make the commercial, so by the time I made it it was like 10, so I was really tired. The funny thing was, I *was* on drugs! I was on Benedryl, my allergy medication, so I was really out of it anyway. That's why my eyes were all red, because I have seasonal allergies. But no one believes me.

Do you feel any connection to the Dell dude?

No, none whatsoever. That guy's a doofus. I get a lot of "What if you guys had kids?" And I'm like, "What if we had kids?" Why would you ask that? What a weird question. They'd probably be blond.

zach frechette '04 forgot to ask if ellen knows janie porche's phone number.