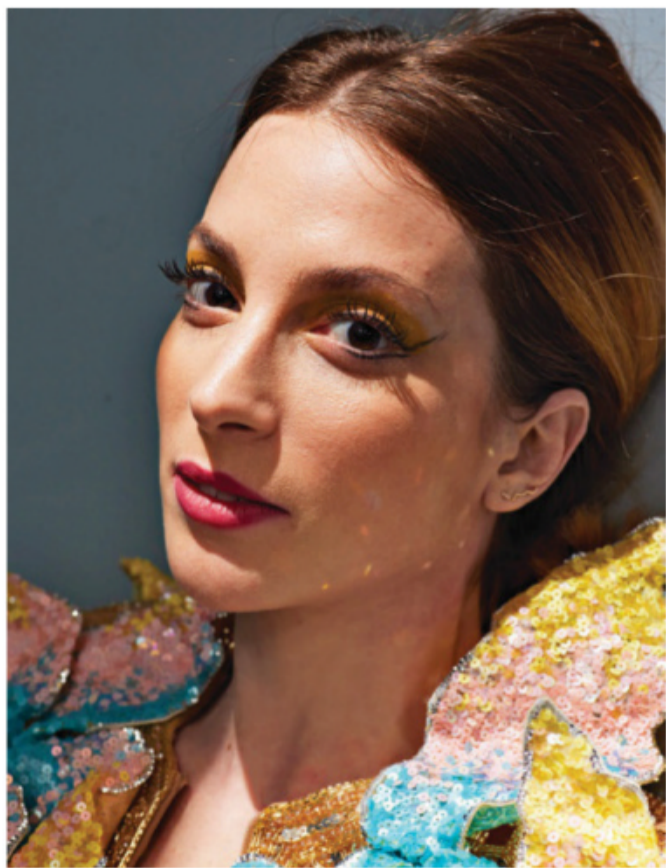


MOLLY BERNARD

AFTER PLAYING YOUNGER'S PANSEXUAL PUBLICIST, SHE'S READY TO EXPLORE THE FULL SPECTRUM OF QUEERNESS

When Molly Bernard's agent sent her up for TV Land's *Younger* in 2014, the then-first-time actress freaked out. "The audition was six lines where I talk about Liza's [Sutton Foster] bush," Bernard tells EW. "I was like, 'I can't do this. I worship Sutton Foster!'" (She's not exaggerating; she sent Foster fan mail as a teen.) Luckily, Bernard, who identifies as queer, got the part opposite her idol and has been playing the fabulously fierce Lauren Heller on the quirky comedy for seven seasons. Lauren's confidence in her sexuality has been an inspiration to fans—and even Bernard herself. "I want to just bottle that [attitude] up, put it into fairy dust, and give it to all," she says. With *Younger*'s final season airing this spring, the 33-year-old actress is bringing that sparkly energy to new roles, like struggling millennial Milo in Morgan Ingari's surrogacy drama *Milkwater*. "The goal for me is to play characters whose queerness comes third, ninth, 100th on the list of descriptions," she says. "That's what Lauren does, and that's what *Milkwater* does. I had a taste of that. I can't go back." —RUTH KINANE



JOSIE TOTAH

FROM DISNEY'S *JESSIE* TO THE *SAVED BY THE BELL* REVIVAL AND AMY POEHLER'S *MOXIE*, THE ACTRESS HAS MADE A NAME FOR HERSELF TWICE—AND HOLLYWOOD'S PAYING ATTENTION. BY ROSY CORDERO

WELL BEFORE SHE WAS ROAMING THE HALLS on Peacock's *Saved by the Bell* revival, Josie Totah was performing in local theater productions like *Beauty and the Beast*. She may have only played the teacup Chip, but it sparked a passion for performing, setting her on a path to Hollywood. It wasn't long after that she was landing roles on *New Girl* and *Glee*, followed by her big break on Mindy Kaling's short-lived comedy *Champions*.

In 2018, after that show's run, Totah came out as transgender, starting a welcome new chapter in her life. "Since then," the 19-year-old says, "I've been able to play roles that align with my gender identity and to live freely in my own skin, experiencing this new part of my life where I didn't have to hide anything." Her role as trans cheerleader Lexi on *Bell* was written specifically for her (she's also a producer on the series). While Totah has emerged as a promising young star, she's also honing her creative skills as a film-studies major, now in her junior year.

Totah is aware that even with all of the industry's strides, it still has a long way to go to reach true representation. "Keep pushing," she says to all the dreamers out there. "You're not alone. For so long I was told it would get better, and those words kind of sounded offensive to me. It wasn't something profound to say to someone. What does it even mean, that things will get better? Figure out what serves you and what creates a safe space for you—that's the most important thing."

