

ELLE INTELLIGENCE



LIVE GIRLS!

SNL's newly minted players, Michaela Watkins and Abby Elliott, are already hysterical on the fly. Live TV shouldn't be a problem. Photographed by Jason McDonald

Styling by Malina Joseph; hair by Erin Anderson for Woodley and Bunny Salon at the Wall Group; makeup by Mary Douglas at the Wall Group

Three weeks into their new lives as cast members on *Saturday Night Live*, Michaela Watkins and Abby Elliott pause from writing, rehearsing, and gawking at Andy Samberg to discuss their seemingly surreal ascent to the Big Show. "Congratulations!" says Watkins. "You're taking our interview virginity!" explains Elliott. They haven't had much time off work since coming to New York in November. "At one point," says Watkins, a joke-

making opportunist, "I had to beg to go to the bathroom." Prior to getting the call from their dream boss, *SNL* executive producer and comedy kingmaker Lorne Michaels, the pair lived in Los Angeles, albeit as strangers. "We both knew every single person in L.A. *except* for each other," says Elliott. "I found out I got the job four hours before getting on the plane," Watkins says, "so I didn't even have time to Google-stalk." Back in L.A., Elliott, who is only

21, put in time with the top-tier comedy troupe Upright Citizens Brigade, and she comes from a professionally funny family. Her dad, Chris, an *SNL* alum, is a zany slapstick genius, and her grandfather Bob is a radio-humor legend. Watkins, 37, spent six years with an equally hilarious group of wits, the Groundlings, and most recently appeared on Julia Louis-Dreyfus' sitcom *The New Adventures of Old Christine*. "And I did regional theater," she adds.

"I've played a tree and a typewriter." That kind of anonymity is effectively over. "Our first day of work, we touched Beyoncé," says Watkins. "If you stick your hand into a bucket of warm butter," deadpans Elliott, "that's what her skin feels like." So, are we looking at the second coming of Tina and Amy? They've got the chemistry, the smarts, the contrasting hair. "And," adds Watkins, "Abby can sing like a mofo!" —HOWIE KAHN