

#Boss Babe

FE NOEL: FASHION'S NEXT DARLING



I'm meeting self-taught fashion designer Felisha Noel today. She is fashion's next darling in my view, and with the likes of the former First Lady Michelle Obama wearing one of her custom-made pieces on her book tour, she's undoubtedly making boss babe moves.

"The Luxury of life is what you do with your time, travelling brings people together, and I think people should do that in style" - is what I remember her saying when I stumbled upon her video feature on the Oprah Winfrey Network. It was this statement that confirmed she was a House of Coco Boss babe and would eventually land on these pages.

She's fondly referred to as 'Fe', and the founder of the Brooklyn-based womenswear brand Fe Noel. What I do know is that her Grenadian heritage deeply influences her and she was raised by a strong Grenadian mother and grandmother. Which would explain why we are meeting at her grandmother's restaurant and bar aptly named Wel-Fed while she is home.

It's a hot and humid day in the parish of Saint Andrew in Grenada, the hometown of Fe's family. It's one of those days when you just need a freshly squeezed local

juice with lots of ice, the homemade kind I know I will get at Fe's grandmother's spot. While I wait for her arrival, my eyes wander across the rustic textures, accents and palettes present in her brand, which confirm the expression that her brand is a fusion of her Grenadian culture and modern-day glamour that intensifies a woman's femininity.

When Fe finally walks through the quaint entrance of Wel-Fed, it's clear to see why she opened a boutique for vintage lovers at the age of 19. She exudes a classic glamour that is a rare find. She's sensual, sensible and sophisticated all in one breath and her garments float freely over her womanly frame while complimenting her tousled hair. Naturally, Granny puts down a plate of brown stew chicken, rice and peas, ground provisions and a side salad and she's not shy about tucking in before we talk. I watch in awe as she epitomizes her 'Eat well, travel often and dress to inspire' brand mantra in every way.

How did you develop this 'boss babe' mentality when it comes to running your business?

Growing up watching my mum build a business from scratch is what inspired

me to be an entrepreneur. I decided at a very young age that I would work for myself and be my own boss, and I was set on being a fashion entrepreneur. At 19, I opened a vintage boutique for trendsetters in Brooklyn. When that business failed, it was a major turning point which led to the development of my brand Fe Noel. It taught me that when you fail and realize something doesn't work out, you can move on and try again. You can't grow if you don't face adversity.

Nineteen wow, that's young! So, when was the exact moment you realised Fe Noel could be so much more?

I officially launched the brand in 2012 and rebranded as Fe Noel in 2015, which is when I realized it could be something bigger than myself and add a different perspective to the fashion industry. I faced many challenges and I am still facing them today, but I've changed the way I perceive those obstacles. I call them growing pains and my growing pains are mainly centred around having the right resources to sustain and grow the business. I learnt that you need a great deal of financial resources to build the right team and take a brand to the next level.

It's so true. Your designs are next level though! Why is it important to you as a designer to help women embrace their femininity?

I firmly believe that when a woman embraces what makes her special she becomes powerful. My brand is purposely designed for women who live with intention. My woman understands that she has the power to create the life she wants to live and dress for it.

So how do you keep the creativity flowing from collection to collection?

I'm always reading and I really enjoy people watching (who



doesn't). My inspiration comes from paying attention to details. I keep my creativity flowing by making sure there are always new experiences, whether it's visiting a new place or reading a new book.

Can you tell us about a recent 'boss babe' moment?

Wow, there have been many! One was Mrs O[bama] wearing custom made Fe Noel pieces on her book tour. Then there was being a part of a partnership with Nike, LeBron James and a collective of Harlem Fashion Row designers to design James's first signature women's basketball shoe and showcase my collection at an event aimed at uplifting women and highlight their strength. A recent boss babe moment was being able to fly my entire team to Grenada to work on a project that is very dear to my heart. I never would've imagined I could be capable of such things. It really gave me the confidence to follow through on my wildest dreams.

That's extremely impressive, dare we ask what's next for the Fe Noel brand?

We have so many great things in the works but we're currently focused on building the Fe Noel Tribe and creating the ultimate customer experience on and offline. We plan to get into some physical stores and open our own flagship store as well. I also set up the Fe Noel Foundation to provide opportunities and a safe environment for the future of our generation to express themselves creatively, as well as bring their ideas to life in the form of a business. The ultimate goal is to provide underserved young people, through hands-on mentorship, with the tools and knowledge they need to open their own business as I did at 19. I hope to enrol more young girls that we can encourage to dream and offer them a platform to turn those dreams into reality. ■

■ www.fenoel.com

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