EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

"I Can't Believe This Is a Job"

The cast and creative team behind L.O.L. Surprise! The Next Headliner, the franchise's first live-action series, talk chocolate cake, a mansion food fight, finding their characters, and why the show's real message is that girls don't have to be rivals.

Interview by Paul Salfen · AMFM Magazine

Somewhere between the long shooting days, the shared lunches and a full-on food fight on the lawn of a Los Angeles mansion, the young stars of *L.O.L. Surprise! The Next Headliner* kept forgetting they were at work. One of them said it out loud on set, and it was caught on the sound mix: "I can't believe this is a job." For a series about five girls learning that friendship beats rivalry, it turns out the cast did not have to act very hard.

L.O.L. Surprise! The Next Headliner is the first live-action series from MGA Entertainment's L.O.L. Surprise! franchise. Its eight episodes premiered on the official L.O.L. Surprise! YouTube channel beginning August 1, 2026, rolling out every other week through a two-part finale. The series was written and showrun by Corinne Marshall (*K.C. Undercover*), directed by Chell Stephen and produced with London Alley. And the music is not staying on screen: a soundtrack with all eight original songs from the series arrives November 6, 2026, on Spotify, Apple Music and other platforms.

The premise is simple and familiar to anyone who ever dreamed of a stage. Five aspiring performers compete for the same music opportunity, and along the way they discover that collaboration gets them further than competition, eventually forming a band. The cast includes Olivia Taylor Cohen as Electric Vibez, Kate Mina Lin as K-Crush Kutie, known as Kiki, Giselle Torres as B.B. Bonita, Journey Montana Binns as Shadow Princess and Indi Star as Violet Angel.

Paul Salfen sat down with members of the cast and creative team over Zoom for a lively, overlapping conversation, the kind where everyone finishes everyone else's sentences. Here is what they had to say.

"THIS IS TOTALLY FOR ME"

The excitement was obvious from the first second. "We are so excited to talk to you about this," one of the group said as the call opened. "This was so much fun. And I just keep thinking about all the girls watching this going, this is totally for me."

The days were long, but nobody seemed to mind. "There were days where they were so long, and yet I didn't want to go home," another recalled. "I was just having such a good time."

Salfen asked whether each of them had a favorite memory from set, a moment where they looked around and thought, I get paid to do this. One answer came from behind the monitors. "One of my favorite memories was literally hearing on the mix the girls talking. They had a moment where they were all hanging out, and I

overheard one of them say, 'I can't believe this is a job.' They just bonded. And the friendships really imitated what we were watching on screen in the show."

> *"The friendships really imitated what we were watching on screen in the show."*

CHOCOLATE CAKE AND A MANSION FOOD FIGHT

For the cast, the best memories often happened between takes. "I have so many memories," one of the actresses said. "Every day, I just was not ready to go home. My favorite memories were probably when we would just be yapping during lunch, all of the cast together." She and a castmate had a ritual. "We had this communal dessert. We would always share a chocolate cake, and that will always be close to my heart. Now, when I eat chocolate cake, I'm going to think about that. All the little moments that we got when we weren't shooting, those were some of my favorite times."

Cake also figured in another favorite memory, though this time it was flying. "This specific day when we were filming the cake scene, I was just like, is this really what we get paid to do?" a cast member remembered. "We had a food fight. We were in full-on beautiful makeup. We literally spent an hour in the makeup chair. We were all in cute little costumes running around on this beautiful lawn at this freaking mansion in Los Angeles, and we're going to get each other. And I'm just like, oh my gosh, I got paid to do this today."

It was also, as she remembers it, one of the first days the entire cast was in the same place at the same time. "It was just so much fun and so lovely."

> *"We were all in cute little costumes running around on this beautiful lawn at this freaking mansion in Los Angeles."*

GETTING INTO CHARACTER

Salfen noted that whatever the characters were like on screen, the people playing them all seemed easy to get along with. The group agreed that most of the cast were a lot like their characters, with one notable exception. Journey Montana Binns, who plays the moody Shadow Princess, is "such a sweetheart" in real life, one of them said, though she does have a little bit of an emo edge she had never really gotten to embrace in a role before. On set, she had to shift into what they called "harsh mode."

That led to Salfen's next question: what does each of them tell themselves before stepping into a scene?

For the actress playing Kiki, the challenge was turning herself down rather than up. "I'm very, very talkative. I'm so ADHD, very extroverted," she said. "So playing Kiki is more just like, okay, I just need to breathe. I need to calm down a bit, bring my heart rate down. I love these girls, but I need to not talk very much right now. So I kind of just take a deep breath."

Staying in character was not always easy with this crew around. "It was so hard for me not to break," came another answer. "These girls are so funny, and Corinne's writing is insanely hilarious. There are so many moments where I'm like, I've got to keep myself from smiling. I've got to be sad or emotional, and I'm like, but

I'm too happy." Her fix was the same deep breath. "Tuning everything out, being like, okay, I'm ready. I got this. And most of the time I'm pretty much just being myself."

Olivia Taylor Cohen went the opposite direction for the high-energy Electric. "Before every single scene I would just really try to hype myself up, because I wanted to bring that energy," she said. "Even in the sleeping scenes, I'm bouncing up and down. So I was like, I've got to lock in. I've got to be excited." Her secret weapon was a sound. "My technique for Electric was making a sound that made me really excited before we started shooting and then just going into it, because that would immediately lighten my mood, whatever I was feeling."

> *"My technique for Electric was making a sound that made me really excited before we started shooting." (Olivia Taylor Cohen)*

EIGHT EPISODES IN UNDER TWO MONTHS

Then Salfen turned to Corinne Marshall, who had to steer the whole ship. The pace, she said, was relentless. "We moved so fast. I wrote the series in under two months, all eight episodes, and then we shot it in a month."

Because scenes were shot out of order, keeping track became its own job. "When we would have scenes coming up for the day, I'd be like, okay, wait, which episode is this?" Marshall said. "My biggest anxiety on set was that I would forget which episode a scene was in, because it was all sort of running together for me. I'd see the top of a scene and think, wait, wasn't that supposed to happen in the last episode? No, no, it's this episode. So my pre-shooting anxiety was always, do I know what we are about to do?"

WRITE THE BAD VERSION FIRST

Plenty of girls watching are going to think, that's what I want to do, Salfen said. So what advice would the group give someone hoping to follow in their footsteps?

"Just keep writing. Just start writing," came the first answer. "Let yourselves write the bad version. Don't hold yourselves to a perfect standard right off the bat. Writing is banging your head against the wall a thousand times and then rewriting and doing it again." Someone else added a second rule: "Have discipline, train hard, but still remember that it's supposed to be fun."

Another answer tied back to the heart of the show. "Part of the meaning of the show is, embrace what makes you different. Lean into it. Don't be afraid of it. And don't be afraid to embarrass yourself," one of the cast said. "One of the most important things that you have to do as an actor is learn how to be uninhibited, how to be okay with being cringe or being embarrassing, because that's what people connect to the most: when somebody is just raw and not afraid to be authentically themselves."

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WHY VIEWERS CONNECT

Salfen asked why so many people have connected with the series. One answer came from a parent's point of view, drawing on a daughter and her friends. "The tween and teen viewers recognize that everyone wants to be special, and everyone wants to feel like they're doing their best. So they can relate to it on that level. But then there's also this aspirational thing: what if I got to make four best friends while I was trying to achieve my dreams?"

And what do audiences love about the characters themselves? "Everyone says that Electric is funny," one answer went. "Everyone just thinks that Electric is a hoot and a holler, so much energy, very positive. I think it's refreshing to just be around somebody that's so energetic and always going to bring a good vibe."

Kiki, by contrast, was described as the grounded one. "Other than Shadow, I feel like Kiki is very grounded, especially in her emotional state. She's very emotionally mature." And there is something else viewers may gravitate toward: a little budding romance. "Who doesn't love to watch that?"

NOT ALWAYS RIVALS

The show is meant to entertain, Salfen said, but there are things being said in it, too. What should audiences, and the parents watching alongside them, take away?

"My goal was always to create a show that would appeal to more demographics than just the 8 to 12 year olds," Marshall said. "I watch a lot of shows with my daughter, and when there's something that's good that actually makes me laugh too, it's such a relief. So I definitely wanted to create something that would appeal across the board."

The message she hopes sticks is the one built into the premise. "We don't have to always be rivals. We don't have to be pitted against each other," she said. "Kate said something that I loved, which is, what if we assume the best of people first, and not the worst? And I hope that the series puts that messaging out there."

> *"What if we assume the best of people first, and not the worst?"*

Salfen joked that her daughter was something of an unlisted producer. "For sure," came the reply. "I got notes."

Will there be more? "I hope so," was the answer. "We definitely have a lot of ideas, and we have some exciting thoughts about season two, should there be one."

HAIL MARY MOMENTS

Salfen closed with the question he asks everyone, inspired by his co-host, Dallas Cowboys great Drew Pearson, whose famous Hail Mary catch is part of NFL lore: what was the moment in your life or career when you just had to go for it, and it worked out?

The first answer came with a laugh about a Cowboys-fan husband who would be thrilled by the reference. But the real answer was that there is no single moment. "In these careers, it's almost like you keep getting those moments over and over again, where every moment is the moment," the response went. "It also helps buffer it when that moment doesn't go well. You can think, well, there's another opportunity around the corner."

The others agreed. "It's about building and building and building," one said. "Discipline and keeping going, not giving up. And then opportunities show up for you. The more disciplined you are, the more work you put in, the more that will pay off. Every callback, every single thing you do feels like that Hail Mary moment, and you're like, this is the thing. But really, it's all getting you there."

Another added how much simply being in the room matters. "Ever since Covid, everything's been online. We don't really get to show our personalities in the slate as much as just walking in the room and saying, hi, nice to see you. Getting those moments to finally just be in the room, or even getting a chance to go on a Zoom and meet that person virtually face to face, those are moments where I'm like, oh, I get to see your face, you get to see my face. That's one step closer."

WHAT'S NEXT

As for what comes next, the group has plenty in motion. One has a movie in development. Another has new music on the way and wrote a short film that is now in post-production. And Olivia Taylor Cohen is working on something bigger, if further off. "Nothing that's going to be coming out for a while," she said, "but I am currently in the writing and the pitching of an animated musical."

In the meantime, there is the series, and starting Friday, its soundtrack. Salfen's parting advice for families was simple: check it out, watch it with your kids, and have so much fun.

FIND L.O.L. SURPRISE! THE NEXT HEADLINER

Watch: All eight episodes on the official L.O.L. Surprise! YouTube channel

Soundtrack: All eight original songs, available November 6, 2026, on Spotify, Apple Music and other platforms

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Interview conducted by Paul Salfen for AMFM Magazine over Zoom, 2026.

Paul Salfen is Managing Editor of AMFM Magazine and a veteran interviewer of film, television, music, and sports figures. He is the author of Going For It!, a collection of Hail Mary moments from the artists and athletes he has spent two decades putting on the record.
