

# in the mix

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Jay & Ani for Artists Management

## From Mars to Venus

*The Shield's* women writers indulge their softer side.

For Sarah Fain and Elizabeth Craft, a girly young-adult novel was the perfect antidote to the gritty, testosterone-charged world of *The Shield*.

Their book, *Bass Ackwards and Belly Up* (Little Brown), follows the post-high school travails of four young women chasing their dreams. It was a labor of love, but knocking out the book while also knocking out scripts for the Emmy-winning FX show — they're supervising producers — made for a brutal schedule.

"It was a lot of waking up early and going to bed late," Fain says. "There are some things [in the book] I don't even remember writing."

Fain and Craft met on their high-school newspaper in Kansas City, Missouri, where their first collaboration was a feature about Kansas City delis. They went their own ways after high school, and Craft eventually moved to New York to work in publishing, writing and editing books for the young-adult market. Fain headed to rural North Carolina to teach high school English and creative writing in the Teach for America program, which brings newly minted teachers to low-income rural and urban schools.

In 1998 the two reconnected and soon moved to Los Angeles to pursue television writing. "We were so naïve," Craft says. "We thought we could just write our own TV show."

They wrote spec scripts for HBO's *Sex and the City*, ABC's *Once and Again*, and, to demonstrate their diversity, for HBO's prison drama, *Oz*. "We didn't want to be pigeonholed into one genre," Craft explains.

They began writing for the Saturday-morning teen-oriented shows *Just Deal* and *All About Us*, then began working with Kevin Williamson on the WB series *Glory Days*, followed by two seasons on the WB's *Angel*.

Once they saw the pilot for *The Shield*, Craft says, they were rabid fans.

Although a definite team, the two usually write independently. On *The Shield*, where they are currently the only women scribes, they divide the job by story line. For the book, they plotted the story together and then divided the workload by characters, developing distinctive voices for the four girls. They are now pounding out a sequel.

Writing a book is a much kinder process than writing for TV, they agree. Book writing "is very nurturing," Craft says. "The editor tells you how wonderful you are, what a great job you are doing. In TV, you hand in your script and it's ripped apart. Every time, you're putting yourself on the line." —*Roberta Wax*