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SEARCH

JULY 22 - 28, 2005

in this week's issue

features

Snowy egrets, blue herons, riparian marshes, a delicate ecosystem: This isn't the pristine Sierra, [this is Compton Creek — yes, in Compton](#) — where environmentalists are struggling to get city officials to take a second look at their neglected jewel. By JUDITH LEWIS

[Compton City Limits](#): After Omar Bradley, Compton still struggles for change. By ERIN AUBRY KAPLAN

[Drag Princess](#): COLE COONCE chases after Mendy Fry, the nitro-burning CPA.

Also, JON ALAIN GUZIK looks at Steve Banks' photos from [the glory days of drag racing](#).

news

WEB EXCLUSIVE: JOSHUAH BEARMAN's [megawatt attack on Bush's energy plan](#).

JEFFREY ANDERSON examines [Mayor Antonio's big problem at the DWP](#).

ROBERT GREENE finds a few surprises in [races for two vacant seats on the City Council](#).

LINDA IMMEDIATO checks the pulse on the [troubled future of Venice's Lincoln Place](#).

JUDITH LEWIS sees some hope in the [condor's battle against Big Oil](#).

DOUG IRELAND poses new

The D-Lister's Guide to Reality-Show Happiness

Kathy Griffin, fan and foe to countless reality celebs, puts her own life before the camera

by ROBERT ABELE

As an aficionado of and occasional participant in reality TV, comedian Kathy Griffin has energetically dissected the genre's giddy highs and guilty-pleasure lows in her take-no-prisoners act. But with *Kathy Griffin: My Life on the D-List*, she's taken the shadowing-camera trail forged by the Osbournes, Anna Nicole Smith, Nick and Jessica, Farrah Fawcett and Bobby Brown and given viewers a peek into some perhaps unknown corners: the working-stiff grind of a comic's life, her Spencer-and-Tracy-like marriage, how exactly she gets into impolitic scrapes, and her Herculean efforts at self-promotion. Some of the tiny details of her life were even new to me. Full disclosure: I'm friends with Griffin, which is why I won't be reviewing her show, so instead I thought I'd check in and get her thoughts on the experience. And if you're Omarosa from *The Apprentice*, I wouldn't read on.

L.A. WEEKLY: What have you learned about how reality TV is made from having your own life recorded for a Bravo show?

KATHY GRIFFIN: First of all, I've learned that people who say that they were edited a certain way are full of shit. Omarosa



Ready for her closeup?
Griffin primps for reality.
(Photos by Virginia Sherwood)

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questions about [the murder 30 years ago of Italian cultural genius Pier Paolo Pasolini](#).

CHRISTOPHER LISOTTA examines initiatives that [attack same-sex marriage and domestic partnerships](#).

In IMAGE CONTROL and FILTERED, the [equally qualified Robert Blake and John Bolton](#).

A [cartoon](#) by BRUCE ERIC KAPLAN.

LA WEEKLY STAFF BLOGS

[Joshuah Bearman](#): Leveraging the Infosphere

[Marc Cooper](#): Blowing up political myths and deceptions

[Doug Ireland](#): Analysis from veteran political journalist Doug Ireland

[Judith Lewis](#): Restoring environmental truths and decency

columns

A CONSIDERABLE TOWN

With a little help from Tim Biskup and Gary Baseman, DANI KATZ discovers [when masturbation is art](#).

GENDY ALIMURUNG meets [the voice of Harry Potter](#).

ROBERT DAVID JAFFEE catches [Rickey Henderson stealing](#).

Also, SEVEN McDONALD'S [24/SEVEN](#).

And CHANDLER WOOD'S [ANOTHER L.A. STORY](#).

LA VIDA

KATERI BUTLER twirls [Charles Stolarek's Wooden Mustache](#).

ELLA TAYLOR shows us where Britannia still rules in [THE SHOP](#).

Plus, LIBBY MOLYNEAUX'S [HOOPLA](#).

Letters

We write, you write...

ROCKIE HOROSCOPE

really is an asshole, and you can never forget the cameras are there. Those people who say, "Oh my god, I forgot the cameras were there," that's not true. I basically couldn't pass gas for five months. So that's one thing that's difficult.

Would you say you're offering a somewhat self-conscious version of yourself?

Yes, and here's the thing: I'm pretty on. I'm on to a fault, and [for this] you have to be on so much more than even I want to be, which is a lot. For example, let's say I'd worked all day, and I come home and [my husband] Matt and I just want to sit on the couch, and he wants to read the *Atlantic Monthly*, and I just want to put my head in his lap. You can't do that on a reality show, because the camera guy's like, "Um, so! How's your day going?" And you're thinking, "My day is going like this: I want to go to sleep."

Any other weird fine points we wouldn't think about?

You can't have TV or music, 'cause they can't clear [the rights for] anything. And that's all I want to do. My TV watching had to go from 14 hours a day to only seven. That did not work for me. And also, the Backstreet Boys have a new CD. So that's bullshit that I can't even play "Incomplete" in the car without the sound guy telling me to turn it off. Don't tell me it's not harsh.

Were you ever worried about how humiliating your D-list experiences would get?

Everything was humiliating. I can't tell you how many things I regret saying. About every third day I was like, "Oh my god, that's a career ruiner." It's not unlike my act. I'm a bridge burner. I'm now down to one rickety bridge with bad planks. I can't help myself. Those first three days I was trying really hard to be sweet. How hard can it be? But three days was my ceiling, and then the mask was off. It was like dating someone. That first day you have your makeup on, you're holding your stomach in, and then once you've been going out with a person for a while, you've got your bobby pin in your hair, you look kind of greasy and you haven't showered for a while, and it's their fault.

Were any events manufactured for the cameras?

Look, this show is absolutely real. I could have restricted areas of the

arts

FILM

[The Cenozoic Era passes in five seconds flat](#): DAVE SHULMAN engages in subversive promotional activities with Jim Jarmusch.

[The thrill is gone](#): SCOTT FOUNDAS on Jarmusch's latest, *Broken Flowers*, along with Wong Kar-wai's equally lovelorn *2046*.

Plus, ELLA TAYLOR judges [Junebug star Amy Adams](#), while SCOTT FOUNDAS [reviews the film](#).

SCREEN

WEB EXCLUSIVE [PASS THE PADDLES](#): Digital Trim: Hillary likes her coffee cold. By JOSHUA BEARMAN

[Bringing Over There Closer to Home](#): Though MEHAMMED MACK finds the politics in FX's new series a little polite, the war is still hell.

Plus, [CONFESSIONS OF A VIDEO STORE BURNOUT](#).

And [SURF REPORT](#) by ROBERT ABELE.

BOOKS

[Voice of the Beast](#): JOHN ALBERT remembers Eddie Bunker.

THEATER

WEB EXCLUSIVE: [Living and Dying in L.A. - Part 2](#): In the shadow of Michael Ritchie's new CTG, local artists look for sunlight. By STEVEN LEIGH MORRIS

[Servicing Their Country](#): Women on the rack, from Sacramento to Istanbul, in *Pera Palas* and *The Intern*; reviewed by STEVEN LEIGH MORRIS.

ART

[Bidding Wars](#): TOM CHRISTIE rates L.A.'s fund-raising auctions.

MUSIC

BEN QUIÑONES hears sweet talk from [Jill Scott about the Sugar Water Festival](#).

VIRGINIA PELLETTY devolves with [Devo bassist Jerry Casale](#).

GREG BURK remeets [Freddie Redd, one of the last true beboppers](#).

Plus [LIVE IN L.A.](#), catches the Black Eyed Peas and Talib Kweli.

[SNAKEBITES](#).

house and all that, but I am too much a fan of reality to do a staged show. I definitely felt there were moments in Farrah Fawcett's show where the producers thought, "She's kind of boring, and it seems like she's on drugs all the time. Let's have her go see a psychic." I don't ever go see a psychic. Bottom line. I'm pretty sure Farrah doesn't either. Or the Gastineau girls. That to me is the watermark of a bad reality show: when they go see a psychic.



Gawkers

[Enlarge Image](#)

Are you hoping to change anybody's mind about you with this show?

I don't know about that, but I can tell you that there are things people don't know about. I was on a plane recently talking to Vince Vaughn, and I was telling him about bombing really bad at this corporate gig, and he said, "God, I can't imagine you bombing. Every time I see you on TV, it's one of your specials." And I said, "Yeah, that's because it's people who are coming to see me, but in real life, one out of three times I bomb, and it's usually horrible, especially at corporate gigs." And he goes, "You should have a camera crew come along sometime, because I don't think anybody knows that world even exists." And sure enough, in Episode 1, there's me bombing hideously at a charity event. Something like that is cringe-y, but it's also funny, and I do think that if maybe you think I'm a little harsh on people, then you're going to think of that moment maybe and go, "But she had that horrible bombing experience at the Beverly Hilton, and I was very uncomfortable for her."

Were you concerned at all when you heard your fellow Groundlings graduate Lisa Kudrow was going to play a sitcom star with her own reality-TV camera crew for HBO's The Comeback?

Absolutely. I heard through the grapevine, "Lisa is doing a show that is to some degree based on you, she's wearing a red wig, she was on a really bad middle-of-the-road sitcom, and now she's doing a reality show with her husband." And I was like, "Well, that's . . . me." [Laughs] And she's got elements of being pathetic, and I have those. But I thought, well, it's a scripted show. So even if they started somewhat influenced by me, or maybe an amalgamation of me and two other people, I thought, once they get into writing it, they're going to change stuff. And that seems to be what happened.

[NIGHTRANGER.](#)

Plus, ALAN RICH's [A LOT OF NIGHT MUSIC](#).

RESTAURANTS

[WHERE TO EAT NOW:](#) Pizza.

[WHERE TO DRINK NOW:](#)

CHRISTINE PELISEK takes in the local flavor of "the stretch" on Franklin. (JONATHAN GOLD is on vacation.)

CALENDAR

[>Picks of the Week](#)

[>Music Picks of the Week](#)

[>Neighborhood Movie Guide](#)

[> Crossword](#)

So you weren't nervous?

I was most worried about them having their big HBO budget. I'm opening my *Vanity Fair*, and there's Lisa with her full-page ad, there's billboards on Sunset and a great campaign, the cover of the Calendar section, and I'm doing a podcast. That is life on the D-list.

Are you Kudrow's character Valerie Cherish at all?

She isn't me, because I really enjoy all those D-list moments, and I'm having a blast, and I actually have an awesome, fun life. I have a great job. What I love about the D-list is it's a little bit of the fame without the horrible trappings of fame. Whereas it seems Valerie Cherish hates it, doesn't like her life. Also, Valerie gets shit on every minute of every day. I get shit on every so often, but I fight back, or deal with it in my act. So I can't figure out that part about *The Comeback*. I'm not sure why Valerie gets shit on. She seems like a nice person.

Maybe when you're an actress you want to be taken more seriously, and I really don't want to be taken seriously.

I hear you recently hosted a reality-show all-star reunion special for Bravo. I'm curious: We're five years into this genre's boom, but in looking into the throng of reality alumni did you ever think, "Yes, you're a genuine celebrity."

No. And there were something like 54 of them. I mean, it wasn't like Kelly Clarkson was there. She's someone who became a genuine celebrity. But Richard Hatch? I love him, but no. There was no one where I thought, "Okay, you've figured it out, and parlayed this into something." What they've all parlayed it into is personal appearances for \$100 and talking about all the offers they're passing up. And they all want to host on VH-1. That's the one thing I found more than anything.

Were you beloved at the gathering?

Trishelle [from *The Real World: Las Vegas*] walked off the taping 30 seconds in, because I might have made a little bit of a joke about her leaving stains on my carpet. And Omarosa walked off at one point. The best part is she was in the wings saying to one of the producers, "I don't need to be here. I'm hosting now! I'm a host!" And I thought, "Perhaps of a virus."

Maybe there's an E-list or F-list for reality-show folk?

Look, I like to think that the buck stops at D. If you're going to Z, then what? Double-A? But I will say that maybe even more than actors, [reality show celebrities] are often delusional about being A-listers. A lot of the reality people I met were fun and had a sense of humor about it, but half of them really thought they had arrived. One of them was talking about how hard it is to be really famous, and yet no one's paying for their security. Well you know, look, there were three days when Darva Conger probably really needed security, but I don't know if Coral from *The Real World* really needs it to go to Mayfair. I think she's going to be okay.

KATHY GRIFFIN: MY LIFE ON THE D-LIST | Bravo |
Wednesdays at 10 p.m., premiering August 3

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