

# [***Why You Need to Revisit Kathy Griffin's 'My Life on the D-List'***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BXD-NDR1-JBR6-93YC-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** Kathy Griffin's reality series 'My Life on the D-List' is now streaming on Peacock. Newsweek's H. Alan Scott explains why you should revisit the reality series.

**Body**

The name Kathy Griffin inspires a lot of different reactions. Some love her, some hate her, but everyone seems to know her name. That wasn't necessarily the case when her reality series *My Life on the D-List* debuted on Bravo in 2005. Now that [*Peacock*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/peacock?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) has gifted us with all six seasons on the streaming service, it's time we revisit the reality series that not only made Griffin a household name long before that infamous [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) photo, but also changed the landscape of celebrity reality TV.

Before we get to that, make sure you're subscribed to the [*Parting Shot podcast*](https://www.newsweek.com/podcasts/the-parting-shot?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and my newsletter [*For the Culture*](https://www.newsweek.com/newsletter/the-culture/?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) for all your entertainment news and celebrity interviews. (Including with [*Kathy Griffin herself*](https://www.newsweek.com/2023/12/15/kathy-griffin-finally-feels-un-canceled-after-that-infamous-trump-photo-1848111.html?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).)

"What I tried to do with that show was make it a sitcom disguised as a reality show," Griffin told me last year ahead of the start of her stand-up comedy tour *My Life on the PTSD-List*. "They really did follow me around and hope I did funny s\*\*\*. Like stuff wasn't staged."

The premise of the show was simple: Cameras follow Griffin around as she attempts to navigate the celebrity world as a D-list star. But what we saw at the time—that now I feel, in retrospect, we took for granted—was a glimpse into the future of celebrity culture, where everything is shared, lives are lived on social media, and every move seems to be calculated. Griffin showed and narrated this looming shift in celebrity culture in a real and honest—not to mention funny—way.

Think about this. *My Life on the D-List* came before any of the *Real Housewives* or *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*. Before *D-List*, Bravo was best known for *Project Runway* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, not celebrities. We did get a glimpse into what a celebrity reality TV show could look like before *D-List* with Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie on *The Simple Life*, *The Anna Nicole Smith Show* and *Being Bobby Brown* with Brown and Whitey Houston, but no celebrity with Griffin's intelligence and level of creative control had attempted a reality show that, yes, had a focus on comedy, but also had a narrative and a point-of-view. It was smart reality TV disguised as absurd.

(Unrelated but important: If you're a fan of Lisa Kudrow's comedy series *The Comeback*, rewatching Griffin's *D-List* will make you think of Kudrow's Valerie Cherish. There are so many moments that happen on *D-List* that mirror *The Comeback*. And the two shows premiered not far from each other; *The Comeback* came out on [*HBO*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/hbo?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in June 2005 and *D-List* premiered in August 2005.)

Because nowadays it's hard to separate Griffin from ***politics***, it's interesting to watch how she was able to navigate her liberal ***politics*** during the Bush administration while still performing for audiences who, at least politically, often did not agree with her. Over the course of the early seasons of *D-List*, she regularly included bits about her opposition to former President [*George W. Bush*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/george-w.-bush?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and the Iraq War, yet it also showed her performing to sold-out audiences in places like Texas or even troops stationed in Iraq. It almost feels like that time in history, while still incredibly polarized, wasn't necessarily as divisive when it came to differing opinions. There was room for division while still a respect for talent. Sure, she had opposition, but that never stopped her from touring or, dare I say, canceled her. (And yes, I think part of what allowed this was that we lived in a world at the infancy of social media.)

Because of the era, some of the language used on the show is next-level cringe. One could argue some of the language used is offensive to a wide array of marginalized communities, said flippantly without regard. The two things I try and remember while rewatching *D-List* and other reality shows of that era is that it was a different time—even though this doesn't excuse the use of that language—and that it is a show about a comedian who regularly pushed the boundaries of what's acceptable and what isn't. Language is at the heart of Griffin's gift as a comic, and sometimes the execution of the language isn't great or thought out. But that's what makes comedy so exciting, there's a risk to it.

One piece of this language that bothered me at the time was Griffin's use of "my gays," referring to her gay friends. I remember thinking this tokenized people like me, especially at a time when so many members of the LGBTQ+ community were fighting back against the Bush administration on bans on gay marriage and the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. But now, in retrospect, I realize something: Here is this famous woman touring parts of the country vehemently against LGBTQ+ equality at the time and she's talking about why she loves LGBTQ+ people. Yes, it was in the form of a joke, and it wasn't always said in the most welcoming way, but it normalized the language of equality in a way that allowed people to communicate openly about the LGBTQ+ people in their lives. I just know that it's because of Griffin that some random woman in Indiana said, 'Yeah, my gays should be able to get married too.' And you know what? That's a big deal.

*My Life on the D-List* ended in 2010. Griffin continued to perform and easily went from the D-List to the A-List. Then in 2017, it all came crashing down when she posted that photo of herself holding a mask of the bloodied, severed head of former President Donald Trump. Since then, she's slowly made her way back to performing, currently touring with *My Life on the PTSD-List*. You could say she's back on the D-list, and frankly that's exactly where we want her, and it's where she shines. Despite her talent, at the end of the day we relate to Griffin even when we don't always agree with her. We know someone like her, someone in our lives, someone who overshares, is a little offensive, but who you know will always be a good time.

"If anybody wants me to do an unscripted show again, I would say, 'Okay, but can we make it funny first,'" Griffin told me last year. "I'm learning everything old is new again, the '90s are back, and the aughts are back. You just never know. But if anybody would ever want to do a nostalgia project with me, I'll take it however you want to label it, as long as I can be funny."

*My Life on the D-List* streaming on Peacock is a reminder of Kathy Griffin's impact on comedy, celebrity culture and that she will always be relevant, no matter if you agree with her or not. And who knows, maybe someday we'll get back to a place where it's ok to agree to disagree.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2385435/my-lffe-d-list.jpg)

**Graphic**

My Lffe on the D-List

Frederick M. Brown/Getty Images

Actress/comedian Kathy Griffin poses with her Emmy for Outstanding Reality Program during the 2008 Creative Arts Awards at the Nokia Theatre L. A. Live on September 13, 2008 in Los Angeles, California.

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