



# Calendar

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

## Insider Dish: Griffin Tells Tales on the Stars

The comedian, during her act at the Laugh Factory, trades her show-biz access for laughs, skewering a few big Hollywood names.

### Comedy Review

By PAUL BROWNFIELD  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Good celebrity dish, like navigating a Costco or missile defense, is best left to the professionals.

You have to be a patient and thoughtful consumer of TV (enduring an entire "E! True Hollywood Story" for that one sublimely stupid tidbit, for instance). And you *must* understand how to read the supermarket tabloids, which are to "Entertainment Tonight" what the Nation is to Highlights.

Kathy Griffin reads the tabs like a Talmudic scholar.

In an age not only of celebrity but of media outlets like InStyle magazine—which helps craven stars rip off the public by fetishizing their purses, candles and kitchen tiles—Griffin blows into the room and says, in effect, "Stop the insanity."

At the Laugh Factory in West Hollywood, where the comedian is performing a solo show Wednesday nights through Oct. 30, Griffin got going on celebrity adoption.

"I don't know who's running Thailand now, but they need to stop handing those kids out like candy," she said.

"... Now it's like the hot thing in Hollywood. Crack babies are so last year. You've got to have a Thai baby. ... It worked wonders for Angelina. Angelina Jolie with her Thai baby is now mother of the



GARY FRIEDMAN / Los Angeles Times

**Kathy Griffin mines the supermarket tabloids for her material.**

year. I like how since that breakup, all of a sudden there's pictures of her dressed in, like, a soccer mom shirt and a skirt at the park playing with her Thai baby. Where's the vial of blood? I mean, I don't forget."

It was a reference to the fact that Jolie and her estranged husband, actor Billy Bob Thornton, publicly celebrated their love by wearing necklaces with tiny vials of each other's blood.

Griffin not only doesn't forget this stuff, she uses it journalistically, unlike the happy amnesiacs who exchange idolatry for access.

But even their position on the red carpet can't compare to the up-close-and-personal glimpses that Griffin, a comedian and actress, has gotten as a show business initiate. Indeed, part of the reason Griffin is doing these Laugh Factory shows is to position herself for greater exposure.

You don't quite trust which side she's on, but Griffin has been a

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## Griffin: Dishing on Stars

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double agent for years—co-starring, on the one hand, in "Suddenly Susan," one of those deplorable "Friends"-inspired sitcoms NBC crammed down the public's throat in the late '90s, and on the other going up in clubs and on talk shows to tell tales out of school.

Followers of L.A. stand-up shows like the decadé-old Uncabaret, which is running at the Knitting Factory in Hollywood, have long enjoyed the behind-the-scenes anecdotes of the comedian-actor-writer types in town.

The shows tend to be a mixed bag of on-point viciousness and solipsism. Griffin, an Uncab regular, has enough eyewitness dish to keep her two-hour Laugh Factory show from lagging.

Her show is raunchy. It's Joan Rivers-esque but without the plastic surgery and the daughter. With her flaming red curls and toned figure, Griffin seems like just the sort of person you want on the next Stairmaster, as she tells you which stars she likes and doesn't like. She's got a lot to say about trash TV—the Fox show "American Idol" is a guilty pleasure. And make no mistake: As much as Griffin loves to expose her tabloid divas, she longs to be one herself. "I've been in the tabloids twice just for the [expletive] I've said in this show," Griffin told the audience, beaming. "So call it in."

She recounted her recent appearance on "Hollywood Squares," when she found herself having lunch backstage with, among others, Anna Nicole Smith, Little Richard and Chaka Khan.

Smith, Griffin said, couldn't make sense of her polenta, and Little Richard couldn't make sense of Smith. Griffin, meanwhile, took plenty of mental notes.

Not surprisingly, the bigger the star, the more the audience enjoys Griffin's trashing of them. "Sex and

the City" star Sarah Jessica Parker is taken to task for her fake award show voice, wherein she clutches an Emmy or Golden Globe every year and says, haltingly: "I ... am ... so ... profoundly ... thrilled ... by ... this ... honor ... which ... I ... never ... ever ... saw ... coming."

Julia Roberts as America's Sweetheart? Give Griffin a break. "She will ... cut you in a heartbeat," Griffin said, adding that the only reason Roberts married cameraman Daniel Moder was because ex-boyfriend Benjamin Bratt posed on the cover of Vanity Fair with new wife Talisa Soto.

In Griffin's delicious version of things, an inflamed Roberts wouldn't be upstaged. "Oh no, no, no," Griffin imagines Roberts saying. "Not on my watch."

Gwyneth Paltrow gets worse. Griffin recalls how the lithe actress had the nerve to promote the recent comedy "Shallow Hal," in which Paltrow played a 300-pound woman, as an empowerment film for overweight women. "This movie teaches us that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover," Griffin quotes Paltrow as saying.

"Oh, really? Like the guys you go out with, Gwyneth? Like when you went out with big, fat, ugly Brad Pitt? Or chubby Ben Affleck? Or tub of lard Luke Wilson?"

If Griffin means to take us into her confidence, she's playing the right angles. When she strays into politics, she seems a tad out of context. Celebrity, after all, is now our common language, our collective frame of reference. It's a sorry state of affairs, and Griffin couldn't be more pleased.

*Kathy Griffin performs Wednesday nights at 8 at the Laugh Factory, 8001 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood, through Oct. 30. Tickets are \$15. (323) 848-2800.*