Griffin glad A-list awards has A-listers for a change; Radio tour leaves Yamin surprised by tough shape of i

by Marilyn Beck & Stacy Jenel Smi

Kathy Griffin admits she was "a little bit leery" about getting serious in the midst of her Second Annual "The A-List Awards" to eulogize the late Natasha Richardson â€” but now that it's done, she's glad. "They put together a really moving tribute, and Milla Jovovich and Kenneth Cole present it. It was great to honor her, a nice, unexpected moment," says the often-outrageous, Emmy-winning comedian of the show that taped last week and airs on Bravo tomorrow (4/15) night.

"That's what I like about this show â€” you really don't know what is going to happen."

One thing Griffin knew she wanted to have happen was for the personalities on board the sassy program she deems "the anti-awards show" to live up to its title. "We got some actual A-listers this year, which was cool â€” Justin Timberlake, Sandra Bullock â€¦ " How? "I kind of asked for a new producer this year. Michael Levitt has more awards show experience and more relationships with these people," Kathy says.

Griffin sings and dances with "the Kathy Griffin Dancers" on the show, although she admits, "I felt sorry for the choreographer. He had all these fancy moves planned and I said, â€˜Oh, no. We have to dial this back.' I'm a terrible dancer and singer. I do comedy dancing and singing." For herself, "I was so excited to see the comedy girls there â€” Chelsea Handler, Jenny McCarthy, Rachel Dratch. I got everybody's number."

"If you're a reality fan or a guilty pleasure fan, you're going to love it," she goes on. "We have a fashion show with the Real Housewives. They were just nightmarish in rehearsals, which was a blast! I came out with curlers and no makeup just to watch them. It was hilarious."

It's a huge night for Griffin, what with the awards being preceded by her "Kathy Griffin: She'll Cut a Bâ€”â€”!'" comedy concert special. Her new season of "My Life on the D-List" premieres in June.

THE INSIDE TRACK: "American Idol" singer Elliott Yamin reports he can barely believe "how much the landscape of radio has changed" between the radio promo tour he did for his self-titled debut album a couple years ago, and his May 5 debuting sophomore effort, "Fight For Love."

"Radio is really in bad shape right now. Program directors are getting fired, there's less airtime to fight for, it's so political," notes Yamin, whose soulful and soaring vocals won the hearts of viewers and the "AI" judges in Season 5.20. He says, "I feel really thankful to have been able to make this trip. I'm my biggest asset, and there's no substitute for going out there door-to-door. If I was an independent artist, I wouldn't be able to learn about it as I have."

Yamin's album has been greeted with "great feedback," which especially pleases him because "people in the media and fans, they all talk about sophomore jinxes. We wanted not only to reach the bar from the first one, but to eclipse it."

Will he guest on "AI"? "We've got to keep the streak alive," he says.

"We've been on two seasons, and I know people are fighting to get me on. I'd like to think it will happen, but if it doesn't, well, I couldn't even complain. They've been so great to me."

MEANWHILE: Elliott, who has Type 1 Diabetes, continues to make time to be a hard-working advocate for research and help for those contending with the ailment. "We just did our annual JDRF (Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation) Spring Gala fundraiser auction and raised a half million dollars," he notes. And he recently joined nutrition guru to the stars Catie Norris, shooting her soon-to-launch "The Cure is in the Kitchen" program in which Norris cooks with celebs and shares stories, recipes and tips geared to helping their health challenges.

"She's such a sweetheart," he says of the energetic blond natural foods advocate and author. He adds, "I can always do a better job of taking care of myself. It makes such a big difference."

Other names involved range from Def Leppard's Rick Allen to Fran Drescher to champion surfer Laird Hamilton to Pamela Anderson.

INSIDE ASIDE: Michael Emerson's character on "Lost," Ben Linus, is arguably one of TV's best villains, but the actor tells us he himself has no problem going back and forth from Ben's dark side. "He's so little like me that I step out of him the way I step out of a costume," says Emerson, who's received huge critical acclaim for his portrayal. "They're all kinds of actors who have all kinds of processes and I probably fall into the more technical category. I clock in and do the work and clock out at the end of the day. It's not part of me. It's not some deep dark place that I have explore in my own psyche. It is a job of play acting."

SIGN OF THE TIMES: Writer-producer Bennie Richburg, Jr., ("The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," "The Jamie Foxx Show") is getting ready to shoot a comedy pilot about a pair of young women who, downsized out of their jobs, go to work as dancers at a "gentleman's club" â€” supposedly temporarily. After months, one's turned bitter and jaded, while the other has found she loves the attention she gets in her new life.

With reports by Stephanie DuBois and Emily Feimster.

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