

Heather Graham brings her sexy, quirky charm to the final season of Showtime's 'Californication'

The actress admits she never saw the David Duchovny sex comedy-drama before signing on to play a former lover of his character, Hank Moody

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Underage sexpot, junkie, porn star, stripper, spy: No, that's not a rap sheet — it's a list of roles Heather Graham has indelibly brought to life in her 30 years as an actor.

Though raised a strict Catholic, the 44-year-old Wisconsin native is clearly not afraid to talk dirty. And with her latest role on Showtime's edgy hit "Californication," she takes another sexy star turn: as Julia, a former lover of Hank Moody's (David Duchovny) and a white-hot mom.

The seventh and final season of "Californication" (Sundays at 9:30 p.m.) debuted last week, but this week's installment introduces us to Julia, who got pregnant during her brief affair with Hank and, without bothering to inform him, had the baby and raised it on her own.

While the truth was always out there, it's only now that the 21-year-old son, Levon (Oliver Cooper), poses as a college journalist and wrangles an interview with Moody.

Show creator, writer and co-executive producer Tom Kapinos approached Graham a year ago about joining the cast, and once she agreed and they got to know each other, he integrated aspects of her personality into the character.

"I love Tom's writing, and I appreciate that he made Julia really sassy and quirky," says the actress, "because in real life I'm definitely sassy and quirky."

Graham confesses to never having seen "Californication" before being tapped to join the cast. But apparently the nighttime nookie-romp is in good company.

"I've missed a lot of the really big shows," she says. "I started 'Breaking Bad,' which was so good, but it was so violent and I started having really bad dreams, so I had to stop watching it."

What does she watch? Not surprisingly, two of her favorite shows are "Sex and the City," on which she once appeared as herself, and "Modern Family."

"I love female-driven smart comedies," she says.

During her three-and-a-half-month gig working on “Californication,” Graham got to know her co-stars well behind the scenes, including this season’s other big-name new addition, Michael Imperioli (Christopher from “The Sopranos”).

She says there was a lot of joking around and improv on-set, but the actors saved their best stuff for when the cameras were rolling.

“David’s character is very flirty, and one of the ways he flirts is by trying to make you laugh. This was especially the case in the first few episodes.”

One of her favorite aspects of the show, she says, is how complex Hank’s character is. “Even though he has such a complicated relationship with Karen (Natascha McElhone) and all women, there’s a side to him that’s really sweet. It’s an interesting contrast between his sex life and his life as a parent.”

Though her list of credits — and awards and nominations — is a mile long, Graham is best known for her iconic roles as Nadine, the luckless addict in “Drugstore Cowboy,” Rollergirl in “Boogie Nights” and Felicity Shagwell in “Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me.”

More recently, she played Jade, a stripper/escort with a heart of gold, in “The Hangover” I and III.

Yet the effervescent actress, who may own the distinction of having appeared on “Teen Scrabble,” been selected as one of People magazine’s 50 Most Beautiful People as well as one of the 100 sexiest women by three men’s magazines and been voted most talented in high school, is no stranger to the small screen.

“Californication” is actually Graham’s ninth TV series, her first being David Lynch’s “Twin Peaks,” in 1991, and her longest-running role being on “Scrubs” (nine episodes in 2004-2005).

But the bubbly blond has also modeled professionally (for Ungaro, Calvin Klein and Garnier), done voiceover work for an online digital game and appeared in Lenny Kravitz’s “American Woman” music video.



Her dream, she says, is to “go back and forth between movies and TV, working with great actors, and getting to do my own stuff and telling my own story.”

These days, Graham’s story involves two passions not typically associated with her style of sassy sex appeal: yoga (which she calls one of her favorite things in life) and a daily transcendental meditation practice. It was David Lynch who introduced her to the introspective discipline decades ago, and despite her hectic Hollywood lifestyle, she finds 20 minutes twice a day to meditate.

“It’s so easy to get caught up in the stuff that stresses you out,” she explains, “but it’s a great thing that you can remind yourself there’s a peaceful, beautiful place inside you that you can go to anytime you want.”

What’s next for the bicoastal blond? She has written a movie that she’s hoping to direct, star in and shoot in New York.

“It’s a comedy about sex from a female point of view, revolving around three female friends," she says. "It’s inspired by things I love, like ‘SATC’ and ‘Tootsie.’ I love comedies that are also smart and about something important.”

And of course, because Heather Graham is involved, you know it’s going to be sassy. And quirky.