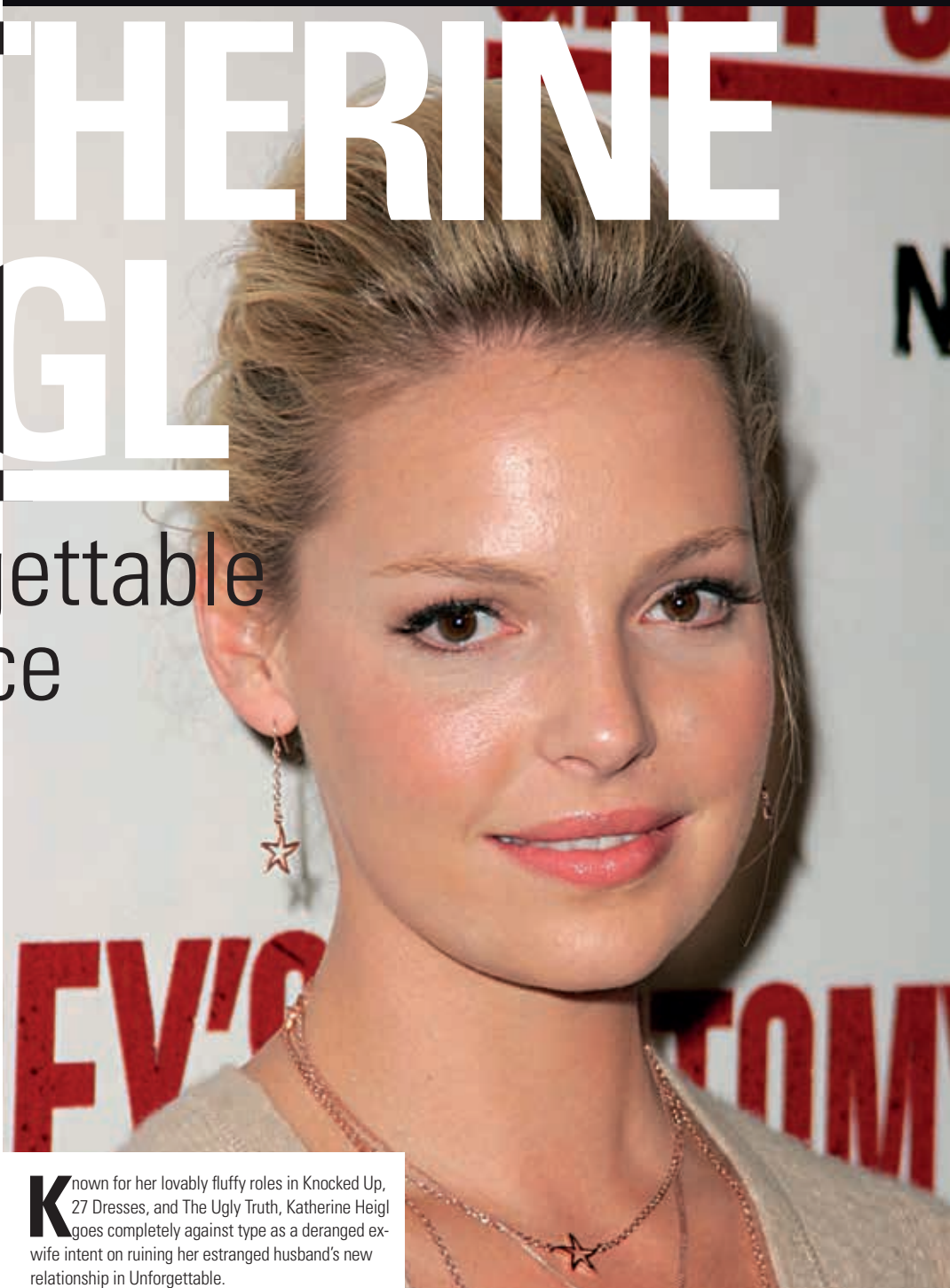


# KATHERINE HEIGL

## An Unforgettable Resurgence

Bouncing back from a downturn in her television career, **Katherine Heigl** sets out to prove in **Unforgettable** that she's got the experience and acting chops to take back the spotlight and shine. **QH** finds out how she prepares herself mentally and emotionally to take on a new role.

**Words by Piers Manning**  
**Interview and selected images courtesy of Viva Press**



**K**nown for her lovably fluffy roles in *Knocked Up*, *27 Dresses*, and *The Ugly Truth*, Katherine Heigl goes completely against type as a deranged ex-wife intent on ruining her estranged husband's new relationship in *Unforgettable*.

Has the star ever experienced anything similar in real-life?

"I have never been that crazy ex as far as I'm aware. But I'm probably the wrong person to ask," she laughs. "And I've also been pretty lucky with ex-boyfriends, no worrying behaviour. It's all so boring." There's certainly been nothing boring about Heigl's tumultuous career.

The one-time queen of Hollywood romcom suffered massive image damage while starring on *Grey's Anatomy* as fan favourite, Dr Izzy Stevens. After five years on the hit series, Heigl fell out with showrunner

Shonda Rimes and was immediately targeted with rumours and stories of diva and difficult behaviour.

The gossip tanked Heigl's career, who endured flop after flop at the box office as a result. But the 38-year-old is enjoying a career resurgence with her stunningly sinister role in *Unforgettable* alongside Rosario Dawson. And chatting to the star – although all *Grey's* chat is off the table – Katherine comes across as genuine, affable, and wholly relatable. And Hollywood loves a comeback, right?

Recently welcoming son Joshua, the mom of three talks about defying expectation and pushing out of

her comfort zone. She also chats about the power of motherhood, the pursuit of perfection, and having it all.

Heigl is married to singer Josh Kelley. They live in Utah with their children, Naleigh, 8, Adaline, 4, and three month old Joshua.

**QH:** *You are a very believable villain.*

**Heigl:** I'm concerned how easy this was for me. I had to do very little preparation for Tessa, she came very natural. Alarm bells [laughs]. I surprised myself.

**QH:** *She's such a big departure for you!*

**Heigl:** I never thought I'd ever get to play the villain because of the roles and the work I'm known for in the past as the kooky, quirky happy-go-lucky gal. I actually have done some darker characters with a little creepy edge, but nobody saw those. They remain hidden away in the vault.

Bottom line, they're all a million miles away from Tessa, so as much as you hope to be viewed as this blank slate as an actor, there's baggage. Actors want the chance to take on these damaged, removed, morally questionable characters and Denise came to me, it was the opportunity I'd be looking for to be completely different to who I am, to what I'm known for. It ticked every box for me, tick, tick, tick.

Especially in that she is not this one-dimensional psycho bitch, she's got a lot of layers, there's a lot of complexity happening under that perfect veneer and I found myself feeling compassion, which is not the go to reaction with Tessa.

But I liked that conflict of emotions. I was scared of her, I was sickened by her actions, and I was also heartbroken for her because she's heartbroken and terrified of being alone and I wanted the audience to feel that. I wanted audience to pick a side, feel torn, I did. And then I assumed early on that the sympathy would really go to Julia but then as production went on, it felt a little more balanced.

It's delicious and juicy to be so wrong and calculating and so shrewd. If she was a good person, she'd be president. But instead, she turns her focus in the wrong direction.

**QH:** *You had awesome scenes with Rosario, especially the fight sequence. What was that like to shoot because again, it's not something you're known for?*

**Heigl:** Rosario Dawson is just so beautiful inside and out. But she is also badass. Tessa is supposed to have the upper hand, be the deadly one, but she [Rosario] could kick my ass with very little effort. She knows what she's doing whereas I don't, I have no idea and probably did more than I should with the stunts.



I really like that we played against type, not just of ourselves but of the characters you expect in this specific type of movie genre of 'my crazy ex'. Particularly in Rosario's character, there was a strength in Julia that you often don't see in the second sweet wife, she's not meek or wait for her husband to save the day.

And with that, Tessa is this hardened character, but not to point of inhumanity, there's a vulnerability that motivated by fear and jealousy in there deep down. It's just way way down [laughs]. But it's there when she sees her child being taken care of by another woman, when her ex-husband appears happier with another woman, and that's stuff that so many go through.

And while the fantasy is very real in our heads, what Tessa does is something people fantasise about doing but never would, when they're going through breakups and divorce and trying to figure out how to co-parent. Because most people aren't sociopathic. So they get to live vicariously through her and actually see what it would be like to exact that revenge that is part of what makes us vulnerable.

**QH:** *Was it difficult shaking Tessa off?*

**Heigl:** I haven't done too many roles that have required this level of darkness but I could never hold on to that in any way. Soon as the shot was done, we were laughing, gossiping. I need that levity. It's my job but I don't allow it to consume me like that. I'm never been super method.

**QH:** *Tessa is very much about the pursuit of perfection, which is a reflection on society these days...*

**Heigl:** ...oh hello, Instagram. Snapchat. Does anyone ever ever put a bad, and by saying bad, I mean real, unfiltered, not posed in gorgeous rosy hue glow, just real life picture? It rarely happens.

**QH:** *Has the pursuit of perfection gotten out of hand?*

**Heigl:** One hundred per cent. I feel before with

magazines and the media, we were bombarded to a certain extent but there was a very accessible off switch. Now, it's ping-pong on your phone multiple times a day, it's relentless. It can drive you crazy. And I'm guilty of it, I used filters, I want that pose to accentuate my best side. And then I just want to put up a cute picture with my kids, even if there's an extra chin in there, who cares.

Life is not perfect. Parenthood is far from perfect but we all try to emulate that. I feel like when I was younger, I strove for perfection a lot, I had this attitude that I can physically do it all, so I should do it all. But that in practice, is not feasible.

**QH:** *You've a new baby at home, three kids now, how do you balance it all?*

**Heigl:** I don't, I really don't and that's ok. I think women can beat themselves over this so much but there has to come a point where you say, enough, I can only do so much at one time. It's hard. When you're working, it's time away from my family, when I'm with my family, that's a choice to keep me away from my job, that's how it is and I can't do it all.

Fortunately, I had an amazing husband who is the greatest support system, he's the best best dad, and we're a team, we work really well together and I don't take any of that for granted.

**QH:** *How is it going with the little guy who is very very cute?*

**Heigl:** He's three months old now, just a little over, and we're going all over again with the diapers and changing and sleepless nights. Actually he's good, he sleeps pretty well, knock on wood. And I've got my little army of helpers, they've been really great, that's why you have older kids [laughs].

**QH:** *Was it difficult to do those tough scenes with your on-screen daughter?*

**Heigl:** That was the hardest aspect by far. I've never had to be horrible to a child before and she is so professional, she knows its all part of the job. But that scene, where I'm cutting her hair and she's sobbing, and I mean, it's no faking, she is crying so hard, after the first take, I walked straight out of the room and cried my eyes out. It took a while to get it together after that. It felt so wrong and went completely against the nature of who I am.

**QH:** *With kids at home, it must really be a difficult task to do that?*

**Heigl:** I'm pretty sure I could never have played a mom until I became one myself and it worked like that, pretty side by side. Acting is a lot of drawing out emotions and until you have kids yourself, you can't really pull on something so powerful and encompassing without having gone through it yourself. And it is powerful, motherhood is the most powerful experience you will ever go through. ■