

Kristin Cavallari

Laguna Beach's bad-little-rich-girl insists she's not superficial. So how did the sexy, young MTV star fool millions of viewers into believing her fiction is fact? BY VANESSA GRIGORIADIS

If you were rich, gorgeous, eighteen and trusted absolutely no one, you might be a little like Kristin Cavallari, star of MTV's "Laguna Beach: The Real Orange County," and possibly the most independent woman on television. Witness the scene – the real-life scene, that is – on a recent Monday at Kristin's college digs of two weeks, a marina-front condo in West L.A. filled with microsuede furniture and flat-screen TVs. Kristin wants to go to lunch in downtown Laguna with

her on-again, off-again boyfriend, Stephen. She calls him on her cell phone. The call goes to voice mail.

"He'll call you back," says Alex, her roommate, best friend and indentured slave.

"I'm not worried," retorts Kristin, annoyed.

Kristin is too hot to worry about any one guy. She is the definition of jailbait: small, blonde, lithe, stacked, with searching, curious eyes, a sneering mouth and a nearly incomprehensible Valley Girl drawl, which is all to the good since most of the time she's not saying much anyway. For a fun page in the 2005 Laguna Beach High yearbook, the editors cast students as characters in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. Kristin was Phoebe Cates.

"Izzat her name?" asks Kristin.

In a faded Rolling Stones T-shirt and a denim skirt so short that her polka-dot panties have become part of the outfit, she stretches out in her new bedroom, undecorated except for a poem her mom sent her that's tacked to the wall. It's about all the things a real woman should have: "A set of screwdrivers, a cordless drill and a black lace bra"; "a past juicy enough that she's looking forward to retelling it in her old age." Kristin has stuck her own pin up there, too. It reads, WEED \$45; PAPERS \$2; SMOKING WITH FRIENDS: PRICELESS.

"I just got really hungry," wails Kristin. "How come every time we go shopping we're out of food the next day?"

"Remember when you said that the only food we were going to have was going to be lettuce and vodka?" asks Alex.

"You were like, 'We'll be so healthy!'" says Kristin. Laughter.

The phone rings suddenly but Kristin picks it up slow. It's Stephen, and he's in.

"Course," says Kristin, shaking back her hair.

HANGING OUT WITH Kristin is a very meta experience: All she wants to talk about are her friends and crushes and what everyone is doing later, but now that *Laguna Beach* is airing, there's also a lot of conversation about her friends and crushes and what they're doing later, as presented on the show that week. Kristin has become a player in the zeitgeist, the country mesmerized by her close-knit "real O.C." friends and the backstabbing, boyfriend-stealing and smack-talking that inevitably transpires between popular kids with nothing to do. In its second season, the carefully edited weekly quasi-documentary has become a certified breakout cable-TV hit. Each cast member represents a different teen archetype (the Player, the Heartbreaker, the Doormat), but none are as much fun to watch as Kristin. When her friends say she's "like a guy" or that she has a "penis mentality," she responds with a self-satisfied smirk.

So we are today in reality: Kristin truly has Lindsay Lohan on the CD player as she drives through the Los Angeles-San Diego asphalt apocalypse to Laguna's glittering enclave in her white BMW SUV, but in the back seat Alex is being madly sidekicked by their friend Jessica, who hasn't yet seen the episode featuring a breakup with her boyfriend that will air tonight (Kristin and Alex

got the tape yesterday). "It's suh sad," says Kristin.

"Omigod, she's so upset," says Alex. "Should I tell her what happened?"

"I know, it's really bad," says Kristin. "I'll tell her."

Kristin has an almost Tourette's-like inability to speak anything but the truth, except when engaged in girly pursuits like shopping or hairstyling, at which point she drops into a kind of pre-verbal trance, while chanting "love it" and "so keewt."

Two years ago, when MTV came to the 935-student Laguna Beach High School to cast a reality show, Kristin vowed to get on. Her dad says her stardom isn't something he advertises around the office these days, what with his daughter sleeping over at boys' houses and being called a "whore" by the other kids, but back then he readily agreed. "They asked all these questions, like, 'What are five things about each of your friends you don't like?'" says Kristin. "I totally beefed up my answers, made up all this drama that wasn't even true."

The first time Kristin saw the show, she cried. "I couldn't believe what a bitch they were making me out to be," she says, her face slackening like she got punched. "Sometimes the director would tell us what to say and I'd be like, 'No way, this is bullshit, I'm not saying that.' It's supposed to be reality, right? Things from January are stuck right next to things from months after – it's like, 'How can no one else tell that my hair is, like, this long in one scene and in the next it's short?' I'm at the pool at my house, and I don't have a pool at my house. Now I just think of it like I play a character on a TV show."

STEPHEN'S HOUSE IS IN Bluebird Canyon, site of the famous June mudslide, and the wrecked houses still lie splayed all over the mountain like crushed wedding cakes. Kristin looks similar to her TV image, but Stephen, like lots of guys at nineteen, appears younger, underfed, hyper. He slides into the BMW's back seat, announces that he's hungover and starts talking about sleeping arrangements at the VMAs. "I'm going to share a room with Dieter," he declares. Silence. "Um, we don't all have to sleep in our own rooms," he mumbles.

"Well, obviously," says Kristin.

Laguna is a riot of obscene Southern Californian wealth, with a Ritz-Carlton on the beach and a Main Street clogged by MILFs and their silver-thumb-ring-wearing adolescent sons shopping for soy cappuccinos, orchids and \$180 bikinis. Stephen, Alex and Kristin have hardly settled into the prime table at an alfresco restaurant before the tourists begin to plead for pictures; one Ohio family has made a list of all the places they hang out

wore one of my brother's shirts and spilled something on it, and the teacher was like, 'Do it over and pretend that he was really pissed, so you pushed him, and he got a spike through his chest and died right there.' I had another one about visiting my girlfriend's grandma, and he said I should do it like I don't want to go to her house, because the last time I went over there the grandma grabbed my nuts."

"Weird," says Kristin.

Alex starts to laugh, covering her pretty mouth with one hand as she stares at Stephen with half-lowered eyes. "I was totally listening and that was really cool, but I was thinking about something that happened yesterday and it made me laugh," she says.

THE KRISTIN-ALEX NEXUS operates with casual bitchery more than high-dudgeon Alexis Carrington evil, and Kristin is really only a bitch to guys. "I feel like every guy in my life has in some way fucked me over, and that's why

Laguna's Talan, Taylor, Lauren, Stephen, Jessica, Kristin, Jason and Alex (clockwise from left)



on the show and is making a *Laguna Beach* tour.

"Cool," says Stephen, nodding a little. "Enjoy it."

"Enjoy it?" says Kristin, smirking. "What does that mean?" Silence.

"This salad is suh good," she mumbles.

These days Stephen wants to be a real actor, and he earnestly shares stories from his acting class. "I wrote a monologue about how I

I fuck with guys, too," she says. Her dad, a Buddhist real estate developer, moved out in third grade, and she felt abandoned; some "shit" went down with her stepbrother in junior high in Barrington, Illinois, that prompted her dad to insist she move to Laguna to be with him.

Men may not have Kristin's trust, but girls barely even register on her radar, except for Lauren C, a.k.a. "L.C.," the pretty, wistful