

# Paris Hilton reckons with her legacy -- and so should we

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Turns out that all these years, Paris Hilton has been playing Paris Hilton.

In her new YouTube Originals documentary, "This Is Paris," which debuts on September 14, Hilton talks about creating the character of "Paris Hilton," in part, to deal with a trauma from her teen years.

I've watched it, and I have to admit that it was both refreshing and odd to see this side of the socialite.

I'm betting I won't be alone in that assessment once people have had a chance to view the film.

Hilton is the OG of celebrities who "became famous for being famous."

With her tiny dogs and humongous paychecks for club appearances, Hilton portrayed herself for many years as a seemingly vapid party girl who didn't know what Walmart was in an episode of her reality show, "The Simple Life." (The series, which also starred Nicole Richie, ran from 2003 to 2007.)

That scene, we learn in the documentary, was carefully crafted by Hilton, right along with her public persona.

"This Is Paris" explores what was really going on with Hilton beyond the fame and endless paparazzi photographs.

Now 39 and a successful entrepreneur, Hilton has evolved and so has popular culture since she first burst onto the scene. We can now view her as both the trailblazer and harbinger of what was to come.

Here's some of what we can thank (blame?) Hilton for:

**Selfies:** Well before the word was included in the online version of the Oxford English Dictionary in 2013, Hilton had perfected the art of the self-portrait.

She addresses this with a tone of regret in the documentary.

"Now I see the little girls ... they're trying to get the perfect selfie," she said. "They're putting the filters on, they can't even look at themselves in the phone without putting a filter. I can't even imagine a 13-year-old girl today."

**Social media influencers:** Social media platforms are now filled with influencers who have accumulated mass followings for their makeup tutorials or eating large quantities of food just for show (no seriously, it's called "Mukbang" and it's totally a thing).

Hilton sounds like she feels guilty with the role she helped play by being one of the first people whose lives attracted a public following hanging on their every move.

"Everyone says I'm the original influencer, but sometimes I feel like I helped create a monster," she said in her documentary.

Not that she's not susceptible to that monster.

Via an app installed on her phone, Hilton was able to discover that she has spent an average of 16 hours a day on social media.

"It's literally like years of your life spent just looking at a phone," she said about adding it all up.

**Celebrity sex tapes:** The socialite became an international star in 2003 when a leaked sex tape from two years prior that featured Hilton getting it on with then-boyfriend Rick Salomon went public.

Hilton had some thoughts about how it all came about given that she was 18 at the time it was filmed, and she said Salomon was her first real relationship.

After that, amateur porn films featuring stars became practically a cottage industry.

**The Kardashians:** Speaking of sex tapes, let's not forget that Kim Kardashian West first popped on the scene as Hilton's friend/assistant/stylist back in the early 2000s. Kardashian West's infamous 2002 sex tape with then-boyfriend singer Ray J found its way to the world in 2007.

Soon after, she and her family debuted on the hit E! series "Keeping Up With the Kardashians" (more on that later) which has made them a fortune thanks to their spin-offs, business ventures and constant social media presence.

Kardashian West made an appearance in the documentary and gave Hilton her due. "I wouldn't be here today were it not for her starting off in the reality world and introducing me," Kardashian West said.

For her part, Hilton seemed to be less focused on her past achievements and more desiring of healing from her past traumas, which came to light during the filming of the documentary.

For all her success (including \$3 billion in sales from her product lines according to the doc), the love of her fans -- including two who fly 30 hours to Korea for one of her appearances -- and her jet-set lifestyle, it's hard not to feel sorry for Hilton after watching "This Is Paris."

"I don't even know who I am sometimes," she said, noting that at times her life resembles a cartoon to her.

But after watching her film, I feel like at least she's trying to grow as a person -- and aren't we all?