

# The Time Of Our Life: Remembering The Night Seinfeld Ended

"For the rest of our lives, when someone thinks of one of us, they'll think of all four of us. I can't think of three people I'd rather that be true of."

[Jerry Seinfeld, to Julia-Louis Dreyfus, Jason Alexander and Michael Richards, in the huddle before the finale]

*It's something unpredictable  
But in the end it's right  
I hope you had the time of your life*

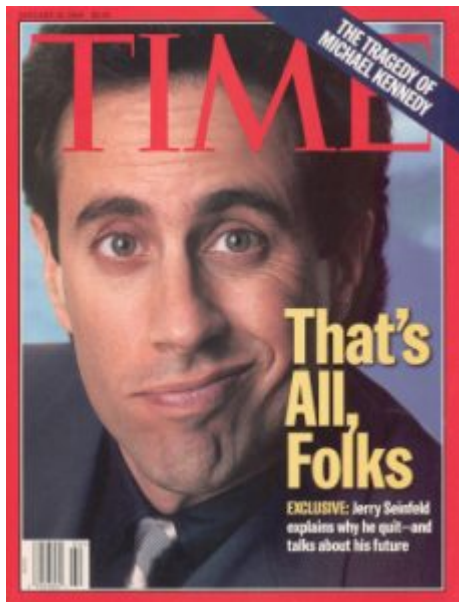
[Green Day]



During the 1997-98 school year I was a sophomore at the University of South Carolina. And every Thursday night at 9:00 I would gather with my brother Ashley, and our friends Shawn Simeral and Bryan Baxley to watch *Seinfeld*. It was our favorite show. For all of us. Occasionally others joined us and occasionally we would meet up at 8:00 to watch *Friends* as

well, but there was no doubt the night was dedicated to Jerry, George, Elaine and Kramer. They were a huge part of our week and had been for several years.

Halfway through the year, we got the news that this was it for *Seinfeld*. This would be the last season. I remember Ashley collecting as many magazines as he could that had this news on the cover. It's weird to think that back then we got news without Facebook or Twitter. But just the same, the TV show that defined our adolescence was going off the air.



So, of course, we, like millions of other Americans, had the big finale party. Since school was out for us on May 14, 1998, we had it at our parents' house. The place was packed. I recall so many details. I was decked out in my black T-shirt that had Wayne Knight on the front saying "Hello, Jerry" and on the back in big block letters said HELLO NEWMAN. I wore it every Thursday back then. I remember sitting in my favorite chair, which was closest to the TV. I remember sneaking a peek at our church's youth pastor, who was among the invited guests, when Elaine and Puddy went at it over Hell in a scene during the clip show.

I remember the clip show (now called "The Chronicle") being cut off short so that the finale could start early because it could not fit into a one-hour time slot. I remember one thing they didn't cut was a brief, sentimental video with more serious video and photos, including stills of the main characters and empty shots of Jerry's apartment and Monk's. "Good Riddance" by Green Day played behind it, a song subtitled "The Time of Your Life". I remember wanting to cry, which was completely unexpected because anyone who knows the show knows that it was anti-serious 99.99% of the time. They even mocked crying in one episode, with Jerry not understanding what "this salty discharge" was and in real production, the writers and cast adhered to a "No hugging, No learning" mantra at Larry David's direction.

Yet in the huddle before the finale, we would later learn that Jerry, Jason and Julia all started crying. Because life cannot always imitate art. Michael, the method actor who hated mistakes during filming (which you can see on the outtakes), was the only hold out on emotion. Yet, the lyrics to the Green Day song overlapping those Seinfeld images struck a chord with me because in sitcom terms, Seinfeld did give us the time of our life. And just like Jerry, Jason and Julia, its ending hit me in the feels.



LOS ANGELES, CA – APRIL 3: Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Jerry Seinfeld, Michael Richards and Jason Alexander embrace on the set of the show “Seinfeld” during the last days of shooting, April 3, 1998 in Los Angeles, California. (Photo by David Hume Kennerly/Getty Images)

As far as the finale itself, [I've written about it elsewhere](#) and this isn't even about that. It's about the event. The night. The hype. The fact that copies of the script were shredded at the end of each day to ensure that it didn't leak. That people gathered even by the millions in some cities, like St. Louis, to watch on huge screens. The photo below is at Times Square in New York. What an incredible image.



Seinfeld felt larger than life and so its finale absolutely was. TVland went completely off the air during it to honor it. I cannot imagine how badly it would break the internet if it happened today.

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I remember after the New York Four were convicted and they had their last moment together in the prison, coming full circle by ending the show with the same conversation that it began with, that I could not laugh at the post-episode scene with Jerry doing his stand-up in an orange jumpsuit, complete with one more Larry David calling out from off-camera moment. It was setting in to me that it was over. After the credits rolled, NBC gave an immediate live thank you to Seinfeld with a picture of the Big Four. If not for the fact I've seen the finale many times, I'd probably remember the NBC thank you better than the jail comedy scene. Because it was my sentiment exactly.





My brother and I said goodbye to all our friends and I soon went to bed. I never took off my HELLO NEWMAN shirt, a symbolic non-gesture of someone refusing to let go. And as I laid there in the dark and the quiet, I finally did shed a tear. Somewhere between Green Day and NBC's thank you and the fact that it was finally reality that there would be no new Seinfeld, I felt sad. It was oddly surreal.

In hindsight, I don't regret feeling that way, but *Seinfeld* fans cannot truly feel sad these days. In the last 20 years we have gotten the 9-DVD set and its "Notes About Nothing" and other fun extras, continuous repeats of the 180 episodes on TBS, a reunion on *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, Facebook pages dedicated to doing nothing but quoting the show, memes, gifs, etc. etc. etc. Those of us that have wanted Seinfeld to live on, have gotten that wish. Perhaps only rivaled by *The Andy*

*Griffith Show*, *Seinfeld* has thrived after its end. It won't die. It's all over the American consciousness daily.

So for that one moment in time, a collision of emotions in reaction to nine seasons of sublime TV comedy occurred. I was there. I'll never forget it. As far as TV goes, it has always been the time of my life.

