# Kelley, David E. (1956-) Encyclopedia Article

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# Kelley, David E. (1956—)

With the success of the quirky hit *Ally McBeal* in the mid-to late 1990s, David E. Kelley established himself as the decade's preeminent producer-writer of popular television series. Hired by Steven Bochco to write for *L. A. Law* in 1986, Kelley demonstrated his aptitude early on for revealing the conflict between interior concerns and external realities, a gift that he can apply to drama and comedy with equal facility. At his best, Kelley creates programming that eschews formulaic plots and neat, tidy endings in favor of three-dimensional characters facing credible ethical dilemmas; these dilemmas, as notably in *Ally McBeal,* are often underscored by unsettling, self-reflexive fantasy commentaries that openly air difficult issues. He refined his techniques with some slightly surreal plots on *Picket Fences* (1992) and *Chicago Hope* (1994) before launching *Ally McBeal* and *The Practice* in 1998. Kelley, rare for a producer, writes much of every episode of his own productions. His judgment, acumen, and direct involvement has made him something of a television "auteur," and in 1999, he accomplished the unprecedented feat of a Golden Globe double, winning the Hollywood Foreign Press awards for both for the best comedy (*Ally McBeal)* and best drama series (*The Practice).* Kelley is married to actress Michelle Pfeiffer.

## Further Reading:

Braxton, Greg. "The Man Behind the Curtain." *Los Angeles Times* magazine. *November 30, 1997, 15.*

*Gates, Anita. "From Annie to Ally: Capturing the Insecure Human Condition." New York Times. December 20, 1998, 25.*