

Kim

“I’m a bit of a rule breaker I take chances”

Actress Kim Cattrall, 56, talks to Victoria Young about being a fan of Liverpool FC, the strong women in her life and why she loves performing on the London stage

Probably best known for her role as Samantha Jones in *Sex And The City*, Kim Cattrall was born in Liverpool then raised in Canada, and she now lives in New York City. She has been married three times. Kim will be playing fading Hollywood legend Alexandra Del Lago in Tennessee Williams’s play *Sweet Birth Of Youth*, opening on 1 June at The Old Vic in London.

Alexandra Del Lago is a wonderful role, beautifully realised. Tennessee Williams was so adept at portraying characters who are both fallible and vulnerable. Women were a huge influence in his life, his mother and sister in particular.

Strong women influenced my life too, and shaped and changed me. My mother and my two aunts were a huge influence. I come from a family of four

children, and three of them, including me, are women. Most of my teachers and mentors have been women – it’s what I was exposed to. My father travelled a lot when I was young and my mother was always there – so that was where I got my consistency and my values from, more than from my father’s side.

But I was very close to my father. They say that children need their mother, but I think that children need their mother and their father – particularly later in life. When I started to go away to school and jobs, that was when I needed my father.

At the age of ten I wanted to do plays, and my father was very encouraging. When I applied to different acting schools he was right there and very supportive, and that was his way of showing his love and attention – as opposed to, say, playing with us. He was an avid theatre fan. He didn’t get to go

much, but when he came to London, New York or Vancouver, he would search out the best entertainment. When I was 14, he took me to Vancouver to see Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev, who were performing together. We could scarcely afford the tickets, but it was the first time I’d ever been to the ballet and it was wonderful.

My father was confident that I had something to give. And I so enjoyed those times with him – acting was a shared dream that I knew would make for a happy life, and a possibility of working with wonderful people. I really wanted him to be proud of me, and for him to be confident that the faith he had put in me was justified.

I moved to New York to study acting when I was 16. It sounds young, but I was not an average 16 year old. I had already lived with a relative in the UK, far away from my family, and every summer I took summer school at the Nelson School of Fine Arts. I had done a lot of ballet and singing classes, and from the beginning I had a different kind of life from my brother and sisters. My sister had a wonderful singing >>



voice but she lost interest in that when she became a teenager. My brother was interested in hockey, and my other sister in horse jumping. But my passion grew as theirs waned, so it became even more of a connection to my dad.

My father, who died last year, had dementia. You don't ever get over that. When you lose someone you love, you never get over it. You celebrate your memories of them. You never let it go.

I'm a huge fan of Liverpool Football Club, which was his team. I follow them on Twitter – and they follow me. When I was there in 2010, I went to see a game and it was really exciting. My dad was still alive so I bought every piece of memorabilia and brought it back to his care home.

I identify myself as a Liverpool-born, Canadian-bred New Yorker – that's what

a woman in her fifties and sixties can be – we're much more open to choice. We're taking much better care of ourselves; we are all healthier and living longer, and creating lives for ourselves that are more than our mothers had. So there is more opportunity – and women are not beholden to a man or even a job to get fulfilment.

When I hit my forties I thought, "I can't play a sexy siren any more." Almost 20 years later, it's still going on. I think that's because I take care of myself, which includes dieting, exercising and minimising stress. I joke that I've been on a diet since 1974, which is basically true. I like to eat, and my body type is not naturally this thin, especially at this age. So I do watch what I eat and drink but I'm not obsessive – it's just a way of life. So I don't have dessert after every

I wear make-up that has sun protection, but other than that it's a very lax regime. I wear a very minimal amount of make-up in daily life because I like my skin to breathe.

I don't really know what the fascination with cosmetic surgery is. It's a very personal thing and it's no one's business. If it makes you feel better then do it. I don't know if I ever will – I'll see.

The best thing about my age and stage is that I've achieved a lot of things in my career that I didn't know I'd ever be able to. I've worked with some of the finest theatre, film and TV directors, and I have a real feeling of accomplishment and contentment as a result.

The other side of that is the myth that you can have everything: you really can't. If you are concentrating

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I wrote on Facebook and Twitter. The reason I keep on coming back to the UK to perform is partly because they ask me! It's a great compliment to be asked to play a great role. If the script is good and it's a good director and a good part, then there are few actors who wouldn't say yes. But I have to admit, it's a bonus if it's in London.

I like to step outside of what people's idea of me might be. I suppose that makes me a bit of a rule breaker. I like to take chances and make choices that sometimes feel like climbing a mountain. Such as coming to the West End in 2005 when I was thought of as a TV actress, then going on to work in some terrific theatres with great directors.

My generation and the one before me had the freedom to make up our own rules. There has been a huge change over the past 15 years of what

meal – I just can't do it. I have a big appetite, and staying on top of that is about knowing myself and saying, "I can eat that today but tomorrow I'm not going to." And I'm always aware – from gaining and losing weight for parts – that the time in the gym trying to lose extra weight is really hard work! I always have that in my mind.

I work out every other day. I try to do cardio three or four times a week. And I've had injuries in the past, so I also do "physio yoga" – a combination of physio and yoga, so I'm constantly trying to rehabilitate my body. The older I get, the less jarring I want my exercise to be, and I find that a long walk is equally as helpful and satisfying as a three-mile jog.

My beauty regime consists mostly of moisturiser. I have a very good dermatologist because I have very sensitive skin. I like to exfoliate and

more on either your personal or your professional life, then it's a slippery slope. A lot of women friends my age seem to be very content but are still searching for something they missed out on, whether it's a career they never had, or a child they didn't raise or a screenplay they didn't write. There is always that feeling of, "I coulda... I shoulda... but I did this instead." I get a tremendous amount of pleasure out of working, but sometimes work can replace complicated situations and life decisions that other people make.

I don't know if men are intimidated by me – you'll have to ask men! If my accomplishments frighten someone, it's nothing to do with me – that's to do with them. But the men who are in my life see me as a person – as a woman – not as a character I've played. My male friends don't seem to have any feelings of intimidation that I'm a 100-watt sex bomb >>



I don't need a huge reason to celebrate. I like to celebrate small victories on a daily basis because we take a lot of things for granted. I celebrate anything from cooking a good meal to throwing a party and everyone turning up! But I also celebrate what I consider to be the big things – being on the cover of woman&home, for example – I am really thrilled about that.

the real me

standing next to them; they are able to distinguish between the Kim that is their friend, and the characters I have played.

I'm not really looking for a man. But the qualities I value in a man are intelligence, humour and compatibility – someone who has a temperament that works with mine. I'm not volatile. My professional life has a lot of ups and downs but in my personal life, I'm pretty easy-going.

I have a big cross section of friends. My girlfriends are from my childhood, from college, different jobs, my team, and various producers and directors I've worked with over the years. I have friends of lots of different ages too – one of my closest male friends works in philanthropy and is in his thirties, and we just happen to travel really well together. We are really good friends and like going to the theatre together.

I like hanging out with artists, musicians, writers and other actors. They've had similar experiences. They are using themselves and their life experience to create, and I'm drawn to those people; I feel very comfortable with them. My friends are really my extended family – where I am accepted and respected and not judged. I'm part of a group, which is a lovely feeling to have.

I hadn't been home in a while so I threw a cocktail party; I just wanted to celebrate

WHAT I LOVE...

Foodie weakness? Anything homemade – it doesn't matter what. There are very few things I won't eat.

Who are you closest to? One of my college friends, who I don't want to name because I don't want to upset anyone else!

Biggest fear? To be misunderstood.

Relaxation is... Solitude.

What are you best at? Being a good listener.

When did you last feel really happy? This morning, when I finished a yoga session.

What's your biggest regret? That I didn't have more time.

What's the one thing you'd change in your life? I wouldn't change much.

I spend a lot of time in museums, looking at art. I find it therapeutic to stand in front of a great work of art. I went to see David Hockney at London's Royal Academy and I just couldn't stop smiling. My mood was so affected – I took it with me.

The art I buy is very eclectic. I like outsider art, which means they have no formal training. I have some beautiful watercolours and I collect a lot of photography, people like Ralph Gibson, Steven Klein and Sophie Calle.

I love road trips. I took one last year around Scotland, and then most recently in Victoria, Australia, and I'm about to go to New Orleans. I book a flight to get there and a flight back, rent a car – and that is the extent of the planning.

I have a few places in mind I've researched that I've never seen. I'll get in the car, usually with a friend, and we'll follow our noses. I have no idea where we'll be spending the next night – we just find a B&B on the Internet. That is the way to not just see the sights but to meet the people and taste the food, and see how people live.

My last big celebration was in January.

I was home in New York for Christmas for the first time in a long while and I threw a cocktail party in mid-January. Everyone was asking if it was my birthday but I just said, "I haven't been home in a while, and that is the occasion." I just wanted to celebrate, and it was lovely. We played great music and someone was playing the piano. I loved looking at the photos of everybody afterwards.

Kim Cattrall is playing Alexandra Del Lago in Tennessee Williams's play Sweet Birth Of Youth, opening on 1 June at The Old Vic in London. Call 0844-8717628 or go to oldvictheatre.com. w&h

