

EXCLUSIVE: TALKIN' SMACK WITH  
THE BEASTIE BOYS

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The Closer's **KYRA SEDGWICK** has found the formula for happiness on the job and with the family

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38

## Features

### 38 THE BRIGHT SIDE

Throughout her life, **Kyra Sedgwick** has welcomed personal and professional changes with her trademark sunny disposition. As her hit show begins its final season, she is — what else? — looking forward to what's next. BY J. RENTILLY

### 48 RHYMIN' & STEALIN'

The **Beastie Boys** never let any hurdle — not industry executives, not fan expectations, not disapproving preteen girls — stop them on their road to rap glory. Now, as member Adam Yauch continues his fight with cancer, the boys from Brooklyn keep battling with the release of their latest album and short film. BY BOB MEHR



**Great mysteries** peak with a big reveal. And there is one here, too, even if Kyra Sedgwick declares that she is “totally boring” and “an open book” before spreading extra butter over an expensive croissant, the perfect capper to an early-morning yoga class in crisp downtown Vancouver, where she is filming a movie. Sedgwick lays her napkin across her lap, her phalanx of bracelets chiming with the gentle movement, and positively glows with curiosity and satisfaction. This is a woman in love with it all.

She looks eagerly across the table to determine if you believe her or not, the whole “totally boring” thing, inspecting you with those joyous eyes and that spectacular half-moon smile, which often finds her expectantly, ever-so-subtly nibbling her lower lip. It is a look that is simultaneously vulnerable and mischievous.

And then she asks you to open the jelly for her, a charmingly coquettish move, especially when one tallies up Sedgwick’s formidable presence within the entertainment industry: a mantelful of awards and a laundry list of producing credits — not to mention her joyful marriage to Kevin Bacon, which is fast approaching its silver anniversary, and her role as mother to two college students. No, Sedgwick is no damsel in distress. She could probably charm the lid off that jar of jam, twirling her hair around her fingertips, occasionally plopping her chin into her hands. But, in a case of classic misdirection, she’d rather have you pry it loose than work your

ways on the pages of her “open book.”

In fact, you have to go to her colleagues — her co-stars on TNT’s *The Closer*, for which Sedgwick has received an Emmy nomination every year since it debuted in 2005; she finally won the award last fall — to gather even a tablespoon of dirt, and even that shakes out like this: “She’s prone to breaking out in song — that whole classic-rock, ‘Sweet Emotion’ thing,” says Corey Reynolds, who plays Sgt. David Gabriel on the show. “And she struggles with the ’80s dance move called ‘The Snake.’ Other than that? Perfect.”

J.K. Simmons, who plays assistant police chief Will Pope, offers an equally mild morsel. “Kyra cannot dunk a basketball,” he says. “And she once tried to introduce me to Charles Barkley as Shaquille O’Neal. She had no idea it wasn’t Shaq — sports acumen being, possibly, her one great failing.”

Her biggest secret is not particularly deep either, but it is dark. The darker the better, in fact: “She’s a chocoholic,” Simmons deadpans. *Closer* creator James Duff confirms: “It’s not unusual at all to see her eating See’s Candies at the end of a day’s shooting before going home to dinner,” he says. “It’s irritating that she can do that and still keep her figure.”

To these charges, Sedgwick cops. She almost relishes the opportunity to confess,

After seven seasons and more than 100 episodes, Sedgwick’s Deputy Chief Brenda Leigh Johnson will dip into her chocolate stash for the last time when *The Closer* ends its run later this year.





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as guest stars so colorfully do week in and week out on *The Closer*. “Really, the reason we’re talking at all right now is because of a Ding Dong,” she says, referencing the chocolate delectable her character devours in the closing minutes of the pilot episode.

“That Ding Dong, that scene — that’s one of the reasons I took the role, honestly,” she

says. “First of all, I knew I wouldn’t mind doing that scene 47 times if we had to. But also, it opened a door of endless possibilities to that character for me. Brenda is desperately trying to hold it together all the time in her work, in her relationships, in her life. When given the moment to relax, it’s secret and it’s sugar and it’s a release and it’s flawed

and it’s relatable and accessible and lovable. That was my keyhole into the character, and I think about that scene a lot, even today. And not just because it has chocolate in it.”

Indeed, Deputy Chief Brenda Leigh Johnson can turn a body bag into an arrest inside of 45 minutes, but she can’t seem to get more than a wispy chalk line around her



private life, which is often overshadowed by her work. Sedgwick knows that many *Closer* viewers (there are nearly 7 million of them weekly) tune in to watch cases crack but that many more connect with the character's personal journey. "I really bare my soul with this character, and I think people get something out of that, watching these characters do their best with what they have," she says. "I think a lot of women struggle with personal and professional issues, and I love to be able to explore that and show how hard it can be to do both things at all, let alone well. Women are asked to be so many things today: serious and smart and capable, not too soft or messy, yet a Playboy bunny in the bedroom, and also vulnerable and fierce and on top of it all. It's very confusing. Don't get me wrong; it's a mess for men too. But I think the characters and the relationships are one of the reasons we've been so successful."

From the outside looking in, it would appear Sedgwick's life is devoid of the tabloid dramas that are part and parcel

of Hollywood life. That may be because, through mindful choices and a well-practiced self-awareness, the 45-year-old shed the skin of tortured artist long ago. "I was very serious in my 20s, and that weight started feeling like too much to bear," she says. "I didn't want to carry it anymore, so I worked on it. A lot."

Sedgwick says she used to be grimly unforgiving of herself — her work, her appearance, the choices she made. But she has learned to release expectations — "at least a lot of the time," she laughs — and to work more harmoniously with "lightness and balance and acceptance." She believes her work has improved as a result of this nondenominational liberation, and her quality of life too. "There is no celebration or prize for bitterness in this life, unless you're a comic," she says. "If you're Ricky Gervais, I hope you never stop. Everyone else, just lighten up, man."

Born into an affluent New York family, schooled privately and possessing a

**TOP:** Sedgwick and husband Kevin Bacon, who have been married for nearly a quarter of a century, presented at the 61st Annual Primetime Emmy Awards in 2009.

well-stamped passport, Sedgwick enjoyed "the escape" of performance and landed her first professional gig, an 18-month stint on the NBC soap opera *Another World*, when she was only 16. Her career blossomed in sync with the Julia Robertses and Sandra Bullocks and Michelle Pfeiffers of Tinseltown, as she landed meaningful roles in Cameron Crowe's *Singles*, Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July*, and *Something to Talk About*, an uncommonly good relationship dramedy with Roberts and Robert Duvall. She appeared on a fast-track to stardom but settled for a slow burn that, to her most ardent admirers, sometimes made her seem more like a milk-carton portrait: Where is she now?

"I was relatively practical about it. I always said to myself, 'If several years go by and I don't get a job, then I need to find something

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else to do," she says. "I think if I stunk and I wasn't getting work, I would've known it and moved on. If I stunk and I was getting work, this might be a different story we're telling, and if I was great and I wasn't getting work, you wouldn't be talking to me at all. There were some years where I wasn't getting the work I wanted, but the message was: If you love it, stay with it. But there were also other amazing things happening in my life."

What happened was Sedgwick bridged the six degrees of separation between herself and Kevin Bacon, and one of Hollywood's most admirably devoted partnerships was born. ("Don't ask me how we do it," she laughs. "I love him. He loves me. The secret is: Don't take advice from celebrities about marriage.") By 23, Sedgwick was a new mother. "I remember every minute from that time of my life, being a mother, being with our babies," she says. "I don't feel like I missed a thing. And I'm so thankful for that."

But Hollywood was moving to a different rhythm. While Bacon's career flourished with high-octane turns in *A Few Good Men*, *Sleepers* and *Apollo 13*, Sedgwick trod the boards of domestic life — and happily so, even if her career suffered a bit as a result.

"Yet her talent had only grown," says Duff. "And motherhood creates its own work ethic that nothing in 'work life' can rival. By the time we met up [on *The Closer*], she was completely at peace, not really looking for a television series and also totally ready."

Virtually overnight, Sedgwick was the name on everyone's tongue. She and Duff worked closely to ensure that each episode of *The Closer* offered not only a crackerjack police procedural but also "a window into the heart" of Sedgwick's character. That hard work entailed 14-hour workdays, sometimes six days a week, 3,000 miles away from Sedgwick's family in New York City.

Duff recalls a moment midway through season one in 2005, after nearly two months of production, when the set had wrapped for the day, leaving just the two of them to reflect on the work they were doing. The show had premiered to good ratings, its audience was growing, critical notices were uniformly warm, but, says Duff, "we were utterly cut off from almost everything in the world," as often happens in the trenches of production. "Kyra turned to me, sleep-deprived as



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we both were, and asked, tearing up, 'Do you think there will come a time when we can just sit down and enjoy this for a minute?'" he recalls. "She now has an Emmy and a Golden Globe, and she's a household name. I think we've found a way to enjoy ourselves."

But with her contract set to expire, Sedgwick has decided to pull the plug on

*The Closer*, this summer's 21-episode season marking the end of an era. She sees the transition as part of her personal growth, another opportunity to discover a lightness of being. "It's a lot of transition, definitely, but I really wanted to leave *The Closer* when it was still good and when I still loved it," she says. "I didn't want to stop when I was

unhappy going to work. And the truth is, I go to work every day knowing we're going to sing, breathe, have some fun. I like waking up feeling like every day is going to be cool."

Lest anyone mistake Sedgwick's *Closer* curtain call for an early retirement, consider that the actress has three films set for release in the upcoming year — *Chlorine*, *Man on a Ledge* and a still-untitled *Omen*-esque horror film with *Grey's Anatomy*'s Jeffrey Dean Morgan — and that she is only now rediscovering the joy of her craft, a critical benefit of having inhabited Deputy Chief Brenda Leigh Johnson for eight years. The long hours, the rapid dialogue, the duties associated with fronting a television series and the quick pace all required Sedgwick to tune in to the present tense, something she looks forward to exercising in both family life and film roles.

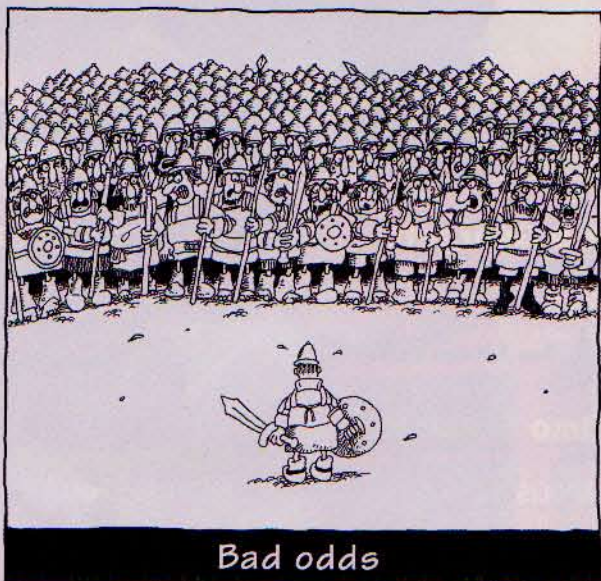
"When we're young, there's a sheer abandon and a joy of playing, and when we get older, we often get attached to results. We want to do things right, so we get boxed in,"

"Don't ask me how we do it.  
I love him. He loves me."

she says, playing with the bracelets on her left wrist. "With *The Closer*, we've worked really hard, really fast for a long time. You have to let go of trying to be perfect so that you might actually be perfect. That's hard. Everyone wants the awards and the good reviews and the love of their peers, but you don't get that by trying hard to get that. You get it by doing the best you can, by being who you are, and trusting that that's enough."

With that, the "open book" named Kyra Sedgwick excuses herself, called to the set of her latest film. She's a little bit Audrey Hepburn, a little bit Lucille Ball, anything but "totally boring," a chocoholic perhaps, but also in perpetual search of light and always lovely. She lays her napkin on the table, takes one last sip of water, flashes that enormous smile — provocative and sweet at once — then looks you straight in the eyes. "Look at that, I'm leaving the glass half full," she laughs, then walks away, off into the Vancouver morning. ☒

**J. RENTILLY** is an award-winning journalist in Los Angeles. He also owns the Yogi Tree yoga studio and wellness center, where he teaches kundalini yoga — though not to Kyra Sedgwick. Yet.



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