



NOW MRS BACON GETS A SLICE OF THE ACTION Kyra Sedgwick has built a reputation as one of Hollywood's most versatile and respected actresses - while managing to avoid the celebrity spotlight that follows husband Kevin Bacon. Here she tells Louette Harding how remaining 'off the radar' has helped her career to flourish

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Kyra Sedgwick is a woman nudging 40. Not that she has been twitchily counting down the months. Life has been so hectic over the past few years, in fact, what with work and family, that she spent a whole year believing she was 38 when in fact she was a year younger!

Perhaps it is only now, in the pause provided by an interview, that Kyra is able to take a midlife audit. From an outsider's perspective, her achievements stack up impressively. She is an edgy actress who has starred opposite leading men such as Tom Cruise (in the powerful drama *Born on the Fourth of July*) and John Travolta (in the sci-fi thriller *Phenomenon*). Yet her range is so wide that she managed to steal the romantic comedy *Something to Talk About* from the genre's queen, Julia Roberts. To ice the cake, she also enjoys one of Hollywood's steadiest marriages, to actor Kevin Bacon (pictured left). They met in 1987, when Kyra was only 22, and married a year later, quickly choosing to leave Los Angeles for a saner life in New York, where they remain with their two teenage children.

Kyra and her husband are in London to promote their latest joint venture, *The Woodsman*, a risky independent film dealing with child abuse, in which Bacon and Sedgwick lodge two compelling performances as Walter, a seedy, convicted abuser who is struggling to reform, and Vickie, his working-class girlfriend. Bacon says he always knew she should play the part, because there aren't many actresses who could convey the necessary blend of intelligence and vulnerability 'and yet you'd believe would be working in a lumberyard'.

Nevertheless, Kyra suffered raging doubts as to whether she should act alongside him.

'An article came out in *The New York Times* the Sunday before we were due to start filming. The headline read "Why Couples Shouldn't Work Together". It was talking about Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez, who's film, *Gigli*, bombed.

I knew we weren't them, but I still wasn't sure.

That was the panic moment: "Kevin, is every cell in your body certain I should do this? We're going to get killed!" She bursts out laughing at herself.

Kevin Bacon says that when he first met Kyra on the set of the television film *Lemon Sky*, 'I knew instantly I wanted to sleep with her. I didn't know right away I was going to marry her. She had this incredible energetic power.

I was feeling so dead inside but she was so alive.' She thought him poncey and pretentious and he had to drop his carefully cultivated actor's image before she warmed to him. Her parents divorced when she was only three, so she is still bewildered by her own marital success. 'It amazes me I was so right so young.' But she doesn't think she was craving security. 'I love my father and I love my stepfather, but I married someone very different.' Her upbringing was cushioned by Manhattan affluence: private schools, good art on the walls, regular trips to the theatre. Clearly, though, the divorce unsettled her.

'That's something Kevin and I have in common,' she says.

'Although he had a seemingly nice childhood, he's got a lot of sadness and darkness in him [something Kevin has

never spoken publicly about].' Her insecurities, however, were overcome on stage, acting in school plays, and then, aged 16, in a TV soap.

She was 'transformed' by make-believe and dropped out of university because she was already so certain she had found her calling. And it wasn't long after leaving the university campus that she walked up the aisle.

'It boils down to getting involved in this business so early. I built myself a road that I was going down. I took myself very seriously, very young. In some ways, I've gotten more foolhardy as I've grown older, and thank God!

'I was a very serious 22-year-old and Kev was 30 and I fell in love and there wasn't any other option for me. I knew he was the man I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. And I have never once thought of divorce.' Yet adapting to instant responsibility was hard. Perhaps even harder for Kevin.

Not long after their return from honeymoon, he collapsed on a street corner in the throes of a panic attack. Kyra tried to calm him: 'I was pregnant so I wasn't going to freak out,' she says with a laugh. 'That was a tough time.

His mother was seriously ill. We really needed money. And he was about to do Tremors [a movie about giant worms]. He was, like, "I'm doing a worm movie!" The couple based themselves on a farm in Connecticut for the sake of their children, Travis, now 15, and Sosie, 13, but moved back to New York after five years, even though Kevin was happy wallowing in rural anonymity. 'He is so recognisable. I feel for him sometimes.' Pause. 'Yeah, yeah, like we're all going to cry fat tears of sympathy because he's so famous. But I was decomposing in Connecticut. The pulse of the city is in my bloodstream.' She thinks both their careers would have run smoother had they lived in Los Angeles. 'Though our souls would have suffered terribly, as well as the quality of our acting,' she adds. Kevin, after a few false starts, is now established as one of film's finest actors, through his roles in movies such as Footloose and Apollo 13. True, he lost out to his Mystic River co-stars Sean Penn and Tim Robbins at last year's Oscars, but Kyra tells me proudly the Hollywood community is beginning to realise that they undervalued his subtle performance.

She, meanwhile, has clocked up a steady stream of impressive roles, as comfortable in a Shakespeare play as in a feel-good film. She played Olivia for Nicholas Hytner (the present director of the National Theatre) in a staging of Twelfth Night at the Lincoln Center in New York. 'I'm seeing him tomorrow,' she says. 'I adore him!' Would she like to tackle theatre in London? 'Oh, yes! And I've told him that,' she adds. But the fact remains that she has never acquired the kind of high profile she deserves. She has always nestled in the lee of her husband's fame. She discusses this candidly, far too relaxed in her own skin to pollute her replies with self-aggrandisement.

'I'm convinced that if I divorced tomorrow, my career would skyrocket. It's horrible to say, but I've seen it happen. [Nicole Kidman springs to mind.] The American film business is run by men and men want to fantasise.

They like to imagine that you're hot and having sex. "Who's she going out with next?" When you're taken you become less interesting. Also, you have different priorities. I can't fly to LA at a moment's notice for a meeting; I don't turn up at the right parties.

'When I was starting out, Winona Ryder was huge and I wanted to be her. I was jealous of other people's mercurial rise. But the fact is, I would never want to bring up children in LA. It's an unreal world. You don't walk on the street or sit on the subway the great equaliser or battle through rain and snow.' Had she ever thought of giving up? After all, her 'inspirational' mother changed careers from teacher of children with learning difficulties to family therapist at the age of 50. 'Yeah. Sure. Maybe three years ago.

It can be heartbreaking when you get close to a big role and then don't get it, or when you turn something down and it ends up being a big hit.'

Recently, though, she has been enjoying a catalogue of demanding roles. As well as Vickie in The Woodsman, she worked with Kevin on Loverboy, which he directed.

'When you're married there's a certain amount of taking the other person for granted,' she says. 'Sandra Bullock did a small part in the movie, and Marisa Tomei was in it too, and I would see the way he would triple the time he spent with them. Well, thank God, because they're great in the film. Then I'd do a scene and he'd be moving on to the next and I'd be, like, "Honey!

How was that?" And he'd go, "Oh, yeah, it was great." Brilliant as she and Kevin are in *The Woodsman*, it's hard to see awards being showered upon them: the subject matter is too controversial. As Kyra admits, 'The arc of Walter's character is that he comes to realise he will never be normal. Once an abuser takes responsibility for that, I think he can live in the real world and not be under lock and key. That's my rational belief. Saying that, I wouldn't want to be living next door to a convicted sex offender.

'I think Kevin is due an Oscar,' she continues. 'I've heard that people in the industry think he's due, that he didn't get his just desserts for *Mystic River*. As for myself, well, you know it's sweet when people say I'm underrated, but I also feel I've been able to go off the radar and do everything. I can do TV and people don't go, "Why's she doing that?" I can do theatre. I can do film. I can do a small part. I can do a huge part. I can be glamorous or a lumberyard worker. I don't have a lot of pressure; there's not a lot of money riding on me. People hire me because they respect me, not because I'm going to sell tickets. I'm not being counted on to look a certain way, so I can age.' Kyra does not make the mistake of viewing her life's choices and compromises through a haze of sentimentality.

She freely admits it hasn't been plain sailing. She says a part of her wishes she hadn't closed her heart and mind to other career options at the age of 16, and she knows that having children so young barred many avenues for selfish adventure, but 'that was me. It was fate. He was the right guy. I was smart enough not to let that pass by.

'And motherhood is easier as they've grown older. I see my brother with his three-year-old and think, "I'm so glad it's you having the experience and not me."

'Right now, I feel I'm on top of my game. The moments between "action" and "cut" are not fraught with having to get it right. I'm into trying something different every take.

That's a freedom I've always wished for and has always been elusive before.

'The fact of the matter is that I'm 39, I have a 15-year-old and a 13-year-old and I have my entire life ahead of me.' *The Woodsman* is on general release from 25 February

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