

# Kim Cattrall

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CANADIAN ACTING ICON KIM CATTRALL GETS CANDID WITH PIE

By: Kelly Thompson

Kim Cattrall appears before the waiting crowd just as elegantly as she does on the television screen, with perfectly coifed hair and a body that would rival that of any eighteen-year-old cheerleader. When she steps forward to receive her award as the 2012 Walk of Achievement recipient from her childhood home of Courtenay, British Columbia, the crowd erupts into applause, celebrating not only her achievements in Hollywood but also her role as a champion of the cause to financially support the arts. To Canadians, Kim Cattrall is not just the sexy sirens she plays on the screen but has also become a national icon for success, determination and drive. Kim and her family emigrated from Liverpool to Canada when she was just three years old. At the age of ten, she returned to England for several years, where she attended the prestigious London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts before returning to Canada to go to G.P. Vanier high school in the Comox Valley. "I didn't even think about being an actress," Cattrall said, until her teacher put her name forward for a summer scholarship through the province of British Columbia. She received tons of support throughout the years but it was her family that served as the ultimate people in her proverbial corner. "My mother and father were very supportive, as were my siblings," Kim said. "Without that foundation, it would have been very hard for me...I was so lucky to have that." Upon her graduation from high school, she was accepted into the American Academy of Dramatic Arts at just sixteen years old; the youngest student ever admitted.

She was hired for her first film role almost immediately upon graduating. Cattrall saw almost instantaneous success, garnering roles that many would only dream of. Often, it has seemed that Kim selects roles that most would shy away from, considering their intense sexual nature and occasional nudity, but her talent as an actress made for characters that may be put in compromising positions but almost always retain their dignity and strength. She has enjoyed roles in film, television and on the theatre stage, with credits including Star Trek, Porky's, Mannequin and of course, her notorious role as Samantha Jones in Sex and the City, a character who embraced her sexuality and made no apologies for her active sex life or her choices. "It was a much needed gear shift for women," Cattrall said, "...Making that character not a scary character but making her someone who is positive and warm but incredibly honest and straightforward and has a clear sense of self and boundaries. I liked her." An obviously intelligent woman, Cattrall maintains that she never allows the lines between herself and the characters she portrays to blur. But she does note that she is touched by the response of the public in embracing Samantha, even when fans approach her on the street and mistake her for the character herself.

"I think people are excited because they like Samantha and I'm the one who brought her to them...She emits an energy and a love that's contagious and if people mistake that for me, than that's completely okay with me!" When writers led Samantha's character through a battle with breast cancer, we saw a softer side to the typically fierce female. "To this day, I have women who come up to me and say, 'You got me through that really rough period of chemo.'" Obviously, the character of Samantha Jones will remain with a generation who couldn't help but love her bold and brave attitude towards the world.

But these days, Cattrall is known for more than just her role on Sex and the City, enjoying an enviously rich career with incredible longevity. She has also made a name for herself as a producer, writer and an award-winning actress. However, Kim maintains that she doesn't necessarily have a preference for any one of her specific roles or artistic mediums. "My preference is to work with a really good script and a really good director...Those are my priorities; to play wonderfully written women's roles for my age." It is perhaps this single fact that makes Kim Cattrall such a legend in that she embraces roles that are specifically tailored to her current stage of life, without attempts to be someone she isn't in an age driven society. "I think that I've brought more and more to what I do as I've gotten older. I'm very grateful for the continued opportunities."

Further admirable about Cattrall is her ability to maintain the friendships that are important to her, despite her work, which demands constant travelling. Jackie Green, her long-time friend and committee member for the Comox Valley Walk of Achievement, has been Kim's endless supporter since they were fifteen years old. "Jackie is my dearest of friends. We bonded and there was this feeling between the two of us, at a very early age, that no matter what our lives were going to be like, or what challenges we were going to have, we had this friendship and this bond...There's this constant feeling that we're connected." It isn't hard to see that Cattrall is obviously alike her character Samantha in at least one way; no matter her success, she remains a friend that can be counted on through tough times.

In her busy schedule, Kim still manages to carve out time to serve as a champion for arts funding and programming. In her speech to accept the award in Courtenay, she maintained that the government must be encouraged to fund programs that allow children the opportunity to expand their minds and attain their dreams, often found through expression in theatre and other artistic venues. With funding being cut as the government restricts spending, Cattrall urged Canadians in her hometown to take action.

"I encourage you to write, especially in the province of British Columbia, to your Ministers." In her pursuit of supporting the arts, Kim has even set up a scholarship for her previous high school awarded to one special student each year to continue in their own acting dreams. "I also feel that it's very important, at this point of my life, to pass the baton," Kim said, in her award acceptance speech. "What are we here for but to service the next generation?"

Currently, Cattrall lives in both New York and England, depending on her current role, but it is clear that her roots have defined who she is both as a person and in her acting. When asked about how she identifies herself with such a widespread background, Kim laughed a little before saying, "I don't know, I'm just Kim...I see myself as being formed from my British roots to my Canadian upbringing to my American, mostly American, career." Her roles as producer, writer and actor, as well as her unique heritage, have shaped Kim into the artist she is today.

Her career has continued to flourish since leaving Samantha behind. Kim's most recently released film has her acting as ex-pornography star Monica in *Meet Monica Velour*, an interesting turn for Kim who portrays a character who is both hopelessly unlikeable and yet possesses an ability to resonate with viewers. Cattrall gained approximately fifteen pounds to play the washed-up stripper/porn star; a diversion from the usually trim and sleek body that she normally works so hard to achieve. The role was a new challenge for Cattrall, whose equally sexual explicit, albeit, antithetical character, Samantha Jones, was someone whose persona was so easily welcomed into our homes. "It was scary to play someone that society saw as a complete loser and outcast. I really saw it as an opportunity to do something I'd never done before and to play a character that is not likeable, and [is] strong in a different kind of way than say Samantha in *Sex and the City*." In the film, we see Monica not as a glamorous sex object but rather, as a woman who is struggling to gain custody of her child while gripping tightly to an ideal of herself that is long since extinct. In a particularly heartbreaking scene, Monica, who is now in her fifties, takes to the stripper stage in sexy, white bridal lingerie, only to be heckled for her age by onlookers. The pain Monica feels is palpable to the audience, and Kim managed to play the character's vulnerability with flawless skill. "I thought it would really be interesting to take on a sexually powerful woman and make her not be on top, but tell the story of a woman on the bottom...just trying to get her head above water and breathe. It was scary territory because it's not pretty and wonderful like on TV."

Thankfully, Kim doesn't allow fear of certain roles to get in the way of moving forward, developing her characters and challenging society's ideas of what makes a person who they are. "I've been pretty honest about where I am, as far as my work is concerned. There's an aspect to me, which is not fearless,



Dress **Mina Stone**

because I have great fears...but it's about not being scared to be a student in what you're doing." Currently, ever the student of her beloved Shakespeare, Kim has returned to the stage at the fiftieth anniversary of the Chichester Festival Theatre in England, founded by the great Lawrence Olivier, where she plays the role of strong, powerful and notoriously beautiful Cleopatra, for the second time in her impressive career, a character that Pie can't help but feel is much like Kim herself. At Pie, we were not surprised to discover that Kim was as powerful, sexy and caring as many of the characters she has played, while remaining eternally gracious, humble and appreciative for the path her life has taken, saying, "I'm very, very lucky to have what I have at this point in my life." But of all her roles, Cattrall notes that one of her favorite lines comes from *Meet Monica Velour* in which the character says, "Get it straight, look at me. This is what women are. This is who I am." So take a look, ladies and gentlemen. This is Kim Cattrall. This is who she is: Brilliant, talented and beautiful and making absolutely no apologies for it.