Blake Lively on Women in Hollywood, Directing and Possible ‘Gossip Girl’ Reunion

As one of Variety’s Power of Women honorees, Blake Lively will attend a lunch on Friday in support of Child Rescue Coalition. For this week’s issue, the actress spoke about women in Hollywood, shooting in New York for “Gossip Girl,” and what she looks for in a role.

There’s been a national conversation recently about gender disparity in Hollywood. Have you experienced that?

Yeah, I’ve felt that. It’s hard to complain when there are women who are being sex trafficked, women being treated as objects and product. Yes, it’s important to have that conversation, because equality is equality. I feel fortunate. It’s still to far from what it should be for women in 2017.

It’s important to remember that half the audience of ticket buyers are female. Are you interested in doing tentpoles?

I don’t look at movies by the budget. I look at movies by the character. What was neat about “The Shallows,” it was really low budget. It was a $17 million movie and we did over $120 million worldwide. It’s cool to do that with a story about a woman. It’s proof people want to see movies about women. It doesn’t all have to be Nicholas Sparks-type films. When you look at a “Star Wars” franchise now versus the “Star Wars” franchise then, there are women at the center.

Do you think there could be a sequel to “The Shallows”?

I don’t know what would happen. I hope not; I’m not ready to go work out like that again. I’m about to do a movie in a couple months where I’m playing a woman who is a fighter.

Have you started boxing?

I’m not there yet. I’m getting my back strong.

What speaks to you in a script?

I look for interesting women. It can be a woman in every frame of the movie or it could be a woman that’s in one scene, but I look for characters that I connect with. Having a family and having worked on a show for six years, it really made me want to do work that I love. And it leads to greater success, which only means more opportunity to do that again.

Would you ever want to direct?

I’m really drawn to it. I think I would do it later in life. It’s two years and it becomes your baby. While my kids are young, I wouldn’t want to do that.

Netflix has been rebooting old TV shows. Do you think they could ever do a “Gossip Girl” reunion?

I don’t know. Why not?

You’d do a grown-up version with the cast?

It sort of all depends. Would I do seven years of the show? No, because it’s hard work and I’ve got my babies, and I don’t want to be away from them that much. But I’ve just learned in life you never say never. I’m looking to do something that I haven’t done yet, not something that I did. But would I do that? Who knows — if it was good, if it made sense. We had so much fun shooting and living and working in New York City.

The show glamorized Manhattan for a post-“Sex and the City” generation.

Josh [Schwartz] and Stephanie [Savage] refused to do the show in Toronto. They said, “No, New York City is the star of the show.” And so they fought for it to be made in New York. If we would have been in Toronto, I don’t know if we would have made it past our first episode.

I can’t imagine the show being set in a fake New York.

We were always in the coolest new spots. It was almost like a city guide as well as a fun show to watch. We were one of the first people to be at Sleep No More.

Would you go back to TV?

For me, it’s about good content. My favorite new things I’ve seen this year have been shows over movies, between “The OA” and “Stranger Things.” I finally watched all of “Game of Thrones” and “Westworld.” I love being an audience member of long-form story telling. I would only want to be in a show that I would want to watch.