

## **Discovery Won't Produce 'Klondike' Sequel**

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**The cable network will take a wait-and-see approach with its first original scripted project, producers said at TCA.**



Discovery  
"Klondike"

Discovery Channel presented its first-ever original scripted program on Thursday at the Television Critics Association's winter press tour with *Klondike*, its six-hour miniseries that explores one man's search for gold -- and justice -- in 1897.

*Klondike* tells the story of the last great gold rush in history. It's based on the **Charlotte Gray** novel *Gold Diggers: Striking It Rich in the Klondike* and hails from showrunner **Paul Scheuring** (*Prison Break*) and executive producers **Ridley Scott** and **David Zucker**. **Richard Madden** (*Game of Thrones*) stars as Bill Haskell, a determined college graduate who travels to the Klondike with the hopes of making a name for himself.

Discovery executive vp production and development **Dolores Gavin** said the conversation to enter the scripted territory started three years ago when executives wanted to tell stories they hadn't yet told. They

realized they were successful in the unscripted territory with *Gold Rush* -- its No. 1 series -- and three other gold-themed series but hadn't explored the *real* gold rush.

## **PHOTOS: Midseason TV Preview**

"At the core of who we are at Discovery, it's about man's relationship to nature," she said. "Sometimes that's beautiful and sometimes that's agonizing. We decided we wanted to get into scripted and tell relatable stories."

Gavin added that it took months of back and forth with executives before they got the greenlight on *Klondike*, and that it was "exhilarating and scary" once they finally did. The network, which has already announced [other scripted projects in development](#), plans to take a wait-and-see approach to determine how people respond to *Klondike* before ordering new projects. "We want to be very particular. The people here set a bar that was unbelievable for us; it was far greater than what we could have asked for. ... We want to be lean and mean ... we'd rather do fewer projects and have them be passion projects."

Scheuring said Scott Free optioned the book and, after he boarded, added supplementary characters beyond Bill Haskell, including **Abbie Cornish**'s Belinda Mulrooney and **Johnny Simmons**' Jack London, to create a larger narrative to help explain why Madden's central character would stay in the harsh Klondike. (The cast also includes **Tim Roth** and **Sam Shepard**, who replaced **Chris Cooper** as Father Judge after he suffered a minor heart attack, Scheuring revealed.)

"One thing that keeps Bill Haskell in the Klondike is unfinished business with finding his friend's killer," Scheuring said. "If his goal was to go up [to the Klondike] to get rich, the audience wouldn't stay with it; we had to create something more. Ultimately, this isn't about gold; it's about the arc of their souls -- and can they find deliverance in their search."

The *Prison Break* alum noted that he was drawn to the project after becoming enthralled with Belinda's character -- who, like Bill Haskell and Jack London, is based on a true story. "In 1897, for a woman to go that far and set up shop and become an entrepreneur was a bold thing," Scheuring said. "In the source material, she became the most powerful person in Dawson City, and that may be the most central reason I committed to the project."

The six-hour mini -- which will unspool over three nights starting Jan. 20 on Discovery -- was filmed over 56 days in Calgary, where the cast and crew faced temperatures 30 degrees below zero, 16-hour days, raging rapids and snow machines blowing real snow into the actors' faces.

As for plans of a sequel -- *Klondike* makes mention of the next town (Nome) that was mined after the Klondike -- Gavin said producers have told the story they wanted to tell. "We didn't leave anything on the table," she said. "It had a natural beginning and end. ... We need to know when to say goodbye and find new stories."

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