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“Klondike” a bold trek into drama by Discovery

By [Joanne Ostrow](#)
Television Critic



“Klondike” Discovery Channel, photo Dan Power

Welcome, Discovery Channel, to the expanding world of good scripted drama on cable TV. “Klondike” is a bold first step.

Whether encountering the forces of nature, avalanche to white water, or the greed of fellow humans, the trek into the Klondike during the gold rush years held great adventure and great human drama. Discovery Channel has previously struck a rich vein in reality TV’s version of that adventure. Now, the network moves boldly into scripted drama with [“Klondike.”](#) a beautifully shot and well acted miniseries airing in six hours over three consecutive nights beginning Jan. 20.

The top-notch cast is headed by Richard Madden (Robb Stark on “Game of Thrones”), with Abbie Cornish (“RoboCop”), Tim Roth (“Lie to Me,” “Pulp Fiction”) and Sam Shepard (“August: Osage County”).

From executive producer Ridley Scott and based on Charlotte Gray’s book “Gold Diggers: Striking It Rich in the Klondike,” it’s equal parts man vs. nature, a coming of age tale and an exploration of the human spirit– aiming to be a sort of “Deadwood” of the Yukon in the lawless boom town of Dawson City. Real life figures including Jack London and Soapy Smith make appearances. (So does Colorado Springs circa 1897, although the film was shot in Alberta, Canada, with help from the Canadian government.)

Tremendous footage of mountain treks and river running make the spectacle compelling while the sometimes clunky dialog gets the message across. The young adventurers have “nothin’ in our pockets, but our head full of hope.” Soon they’ll learn that, in the Yukon of 1897, “You’re either gettin’ or you’re gettin’ got.”