

# Los Angeles Times

## Sam Shepard talks 'American madness' in Discovery's 'Klondike'



Actor Sam Shepard speaks onstage during the "Discovery Channel - Klondike" panel discussion at the 2014 Winter Television Critics Association tour at the Langham Hotel on January 9, 2014 in Pasadena, California. (Frederick M. Brown / Getty Images / January 9, 2014)

January 9, 2014, 1:03 p.m.

Playwright and actor [Sam Shepard](#) has a theory about looking to the rural life of yesteryear for entertainment: Nothing has changed.

The 70-year-old actor stars in the forthcoming Discovery Channel miniseries "Klondike," which tells the story of the last great Gold Rush that swept Alaska and Canada's Yukon territory in the 19th century. While promoting the project Thursday at the Television Critics Assn. press tour in Pasadena, the actor mused on backwoods curiosity, particularly referring to "Klondike."

"The exterior, of course, is different," Shepard said, who plays a man of the cloth in the midst of Alaska's Gold Rush. "But I see ["Klondike"] as just another piece of American madness. It's just another chunk of the insanity that we carry around with us regardless of whether we're involved with technology or trapping beavers."

### **[FULL COVERAGE: Winter TV preview](#)**

"Klondike" marks Discovery Channel's first scripted miniseries. It's based on Charlotte Gray's book "Gold Diggers: Striking it Rich in the Klondike." For Dolores Gavins, executive vice president of production and development for the network, the scripted venture is a natural progression for the network.

"About three years ago, we had simple conversation at our headquarters -- 'Ok, what are the stories we haven't told? What about the real Gold Rush?'" she recalled. "Truth is at the core of who we are at Discovery. Discovery is about man's relationship with nature. With that, we said, let's get into the scripted genre and tell those stories that are very relatable to our audience."

The show comes on as the network has experienced a boost of exposure. Last year, it drew big numbers with its broadcast of [Nik Wallenda](#)'s high-wire walk over the Grand Canyon, a feat that was watched by 13 million viewers.

"Klondike" will premiere Jan. 20 at 9 p.m. PST.