

No mistaking Paquin's pursuit of the truth in CBC's dark drama **Bellevue**

True Blood actress relishes new role as Annie Ryder, a fearless detective who is free to make her own decisions — flawed or otherwise



HANDOUT

Anna Paquin and Shawn Doyle play detectives looking for a missing teen hockey player in CBC's *Bellevue*, debuting Monday, Feb. 20 at 9 p.m.

By: [Melita Kuburas](#) Metro

Anna Paquin likes playing women who are free to make mistakes. Her latest character makes a lot of them.

In CBC's upcoming serialized thriller *Bellevue* (debuting Monday, Feb. 20 at 9 p.m.) Paquin portrays Annie Ryder, a woman who approaches her job as a detective without much care

for her personal safety. To get closer to a source, she gets drunk and high with him in a hotel room; she has a creepy stalker, yet she follows his clues alone to a dark shed in the woods.

“She’s brave in a way that comes from being quite reckless with her own well-being and not ultimately necessarily being that attached to her own life in some ways,” Paquin tells Metro in a recent interview in Toronto.

The show follows the 28-year-old single mom in this small, Canadian mining town as she tries to locate a missing teenager — a transgender star hockey player. But the case appears to be related to a murder that occurred in Bellevue (a fictional town, but the show was shot in Quebec) 20 years earlier, and is linked to the suicide of Annie Ryder’s father.



HANDOUT

Anna Paquin plays Annie Ryder, a woman who approaches her job as a detective without much care for her personal safety, in CBC’s Bellevue.

“I think that the trauma of having been a kid whose parent committed suicide — and obviously that’s not a situation I know anything about personally — but certainly that seems to track as far as Annie having been a bit careless in the way that she lives her life. She doesn’t always act like the stereotypical perfect cop or parent,” Paquin says.

In other words, she’s a decent human making some bad choices, which, for those who have followed Paquin’s career, might sound familiar.

The Oscar winner spent six years on HBO’s True Blood playing a sunny Louisiana waitress who falls into one dangerous situation after another, thanks to her romantic relationships with vampires. Trade in the Keds and mini skirts for black boots and a cargo jacket, and you get Annie Ryder, a kind of Canadian Sookie Stackhouse. It’s exactly the type of flawed female protagonist Paquin is drawn to.

“If female characters make questionable choices in some aspects of their lives or their parenting, there’s an amazing tendency or need to then punish that character. And it doesn’t really happen in male plotlines,” Paquin says.

Bellevue deals with some dark aspects of humanity — betrayal, substance abuse, murder — but it doesn’t do so in a didactic, “message-y” kind of way, says Paquin.

“I think that entertainment has a tendency to put women into very defined boxes. I personally found that really boring to watch, and even more boring to do.”

Small-town struggle familiar to actor

Shawn Doyle, who plays the police chief in CBC’s Bellevue, understands the small-town struggle too well.

The actor (House of Cards, Big Love) grew up in Wabush, Labrador, an iron ore mining town that was constantly under threat of the industry going bust, as it does in the show.

“My parents sold their house back to the company for \$5,000 when we left,” says Doyle, who now has a house in Toronto.

Wabush became a boomtown again, however the mines closed in 2014 devastating the local economy. “Now there are all these people who not only are they upside down on their mortgages and will never get money back for the houses that they bought, but they’re homeless. It’s a really devastating situation,” Doyle says.