

CULTURE & ENTERTAINMENT

TRUE BLOOD STAR ANNA PAQUIN ON HER NEW CBC DRAMA, BELLEVUE, AND HER CANADIAN ROOTS

BY: GRACE TOBY



CBC

Canadian-born actress and mother to four-year-old twins, Anna Paquin discusses her return to the small screen playing a single mom and detective in mystery series.

Canadian Living: What was it about *Bellevue's* script that made it so appealing?

I love complex, intelligent, complicated women—in life and in my entertainment. I love getting to play women who are flawed and not necessarily perfect around the edges. And who live real and challenging lives and who figure their stuff out as they go and make their own mistakes. And don't fit into a tidy square.

The writing and the conception of the show by the two women who wrote are very interesting. It was inspiring to be in an environment where you're creating and working with other smart, strong women. The stories are out there, waiting to be told. This kind of show was very appealing to me.

CL: Did you want to go back to television after your previous success?

I don't really care about the medium per se. I think good material is good material. Interesting people are wherever you find them – sometimes it's a tiny place, it's a gigantic blockbuster movie, or a TV show, or anything in between. I think there used to be stigma attached to certain projects but now the borders between film and television or whatever medium has evaporated, especially as the online mediums and streaming become such a big part of how people consuming content. Good content is good content. Sometimes it's easier for certain stories to be told for TV or miniseries because they can take more risks or not worry about how they're going to compete next to another film during opening weekend. A lot of really creative, interesting people have moved into television.

CL: Why do you think people love crime thrillers?

I think it's fascinating and scary. I think the idea that this could be your town; your mother, sister or friend is compelling. Crime is an aspect of our society and for the average viewer there's something dangerous and exciting about it but also you get to live vicariously through those people and it's not actually your mom or friend.

CL: Do you watch a lot of crime genre?

I do watch a lot of it.

CL: The transgender identity of one of the characters was an interesting theme in this series. Tell us about that.

That was part of the set-up for the story. I think that we really should tell stories about everybody. Some of the stories from the transgender community are slower to becoming into the mainstream but I don't believe those are new stories in reality. I think giving them air space is important. I think it is part of our culture. It's a town with actual people living real lives and not everyone is born into the body that they feel they identify with.

CL: Your character detective, Annie Ryder, goes back to her hometown. Do you think it's harder to go home or start fresh somewhere new?

Staying in the same place where you have history and drama and trauma is very challenging. You can take your problems with you wherever you go. Because wherever you are, there you are. Staying in the same town where everyone knows everything that's ever happened to – well, it's not something I can relate to because I moved around a lot – you never get a clean slate.

CL: You play a mom to a teenager in this series. What was that like?

Well, I am mom to four-year-olds and I also have teenage stepkids. I'm 34, so I don't think it's that strange. I don't know what it is, but actresses don't like to play parents and worry how that reflects on your age. I started in this industry when I was a child so I've never been as worried about that. I was also more desperate to get to be allowed to play people who were more mature than I was because I looked very young for a long time. I'm very happy to be in my mid-thirties and have the opportunity to play textured, interesting, adult women with the assortment of real-life circumstances that go along with it.

CL: You've been lucky to play these strong women in lead roles?

I gravitate towards strong women so whether I'm only in one or two scenes or all of them, I like material that's created by people that I find inspiring.

CL: We're celebrating Canada's 150th. What are your ties to Canada?

I was four when we left Winnipeg and we have some family there but I haven't really been back. I've spent a lot of time in Canada because I shoot a lot of stuff here. Part of my family is French-Canadian, so it was nice to shoot this in Montreal—where people could pronounce my name. My French is good. I can understand the language, but I have no confidence to speak and get tongue-tied. But I'm happy that my kids are in French immersion.

CL: Where are you currently living?

We live out of a suitcase right now. It's a gypsy life.

Bellevue, premieres Monday, February 20 at 9 p.m. (9:30 NT) on CBC.

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