



coverstory
BY GEORGE DICKIE

Michelle Dockery, Jaeden Martell and Chris Evans star in "Defending Jacob," premiering Friday on Apple TV+.

Murder rocks a suburban Boston town and family in Apple's 'Defending Jacob'

A popular teen's murder rocks a leafy Boston suburb and a prosecutor finds himself conflicted when his son is accused of the crime in a drama series that premieres this week on Apple TV+.

In "Defending Jacob," an eight-episode limited series that begins streaming Friday, April 24, Chris Evans ("Gifted," the "Captain America" movie series) stars as Andrew Barber, assistant district attorney in Middlesex County, husband of Laurie (Michelle Dockery, "Downton Abbey," "Good Behavior"), head of a local private school, and father of Jacob (Jaeden Martell, "Knives Out," "St. Vincent"), by all appearances, a normal, happy junior high schooler.

When popular classmate Ben Rifkin is stabbed to death apparently on his way school, none of the kids interviewed want to give up any information. But multiple texts from other teens accuse Jacob of the crime, thus getting the police's attention and placing Andy between the law he has sworn to uphold and the love for his son.

"The heart of this story is about a family," executive producer/director Morten Tyldum explained to a recent gathering of journalists in Pasadena, Calif. "It's about a family who's experienced this extraordinary situation, this nightmare, this thing that both tears them apart and pulls them together in some way. And you really need to feel for them and you need to believe it 100 percent that this is a

family. ... And it's the little things, it's the small things, and how they touch and feel and talk and look and behave around each other, that suddenly (makes this) a family you believe in."

Best known for his action roles in Marvel films, Evans has drawn critical acclaim for turns in recent dramatic productions such as "Knives Out" and "Gifted." Here, the unmarried, childless actor takes on the emotional rigors of playing a parent in crisis, a challenge that he embraced.

"There's body language there, there's postures, there's so many things that ... I drew from my own childhood of what a dad looks and feels like," he says. "I really, really, really enjoyed it, actually, because it really does lend itself to the complexity and depth of the film. I think being a parent, I would imagine, unlocks depths of love that you didn't know you were capable of. And I think that only raises the stakes and makes things more interesting. So for me, it was a fun place to start off that kind of blinding love at times and how far you would go to keep it pure."

Dockery, also a singleton with no offspring, agrees.

"Like with any role, you have to immerse yourself in the character and ... you kind of observe others," the actress says. "I felt like it was very easy for us to sort of become a family on set. We all had a really lovely time together in spite of the intensity of the subject matter. ... I feel like we bonded very quickly, and I think that comes across on screen."

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