



Bryce Dallas Howard salutes 'Dads' in Apple TV+ documentary

Ask 100 different men what it means to be a father and you'll likely get 100 different answers. Which is something Bryce Dallas Howard found when making a documentary that begins streaming in honor of Father's Day on Apple TV+.

In "Dads," an 80-minute film that premieres Friday, June 19, the actress and filmmaker talks to regular and celebrity fathers such as Jimmy Kimmel, Conan O'Brien, Judd Apatow, Will Smith, Neil Patrick Harris and her own dad, actor/filmmaker Ron Howard, about their experiences with child-rearing and explores how the role has changed over the years and the juggling act that it continues to be.

The stories are funny, poignant and revealing. Some, like Kimmel, are visibly moved when they talk about their own fathers while others, like Smith, recall feeling absolutely dumbstruck when baby arrived home, wondering how his brand new TV could come with a thick owner's manual but his newborn child could have none.

The tone is humorous and a lot of it comes from the comics, who Howard felt were the ideal people to describe the paternal condition.

"Stand-up comedians, they are prepared," she says with a laugh. "They're looking at their lives through that lens. And so I just thought of a bunch of guys who are dads who I hoped, aspired to interview and started the process of reaching out to folks and just saying, 'Hey, I'm making a documentary about dads. Would you be willing to come in for an interview?'"

The documentary also comes with a good bit of Howard family history, including the events surrounding the birth of Bryce in 1981, filmed by parents Ron and Cheryl. There are also stories about her grandfather Rance Howard, who died in 2017, and how he played a critical role in how young Ron's character of Opie would be portrayed on "The Andy Griffith Show."

"The interview with my grandfather was something that I did in 2013," she says, "... and that was kind of an afterthought as well where it was like, 'Oh my gosh, I interviewed Grandad. I wonder if there's anything in there.' And so I went back and rewatched his tapes and found that story."

What comes through is there is no one definition of a father or the paternal role. The dad as the traditional breadwinner while Mom stays home with the kids is no longer the rule, replaced by fathers who are home and taking a more active role in child-rearing. Toward that end, Howard felt that those men were unfairly being maligned as layabouts who don't pull their weight and thus wanted to remove that stigma and get them a little credit.

"All this stuff that is just absolutely bananas," she says, "and totally undermines family, undermines men, undermines women and most of all the children who are growing up. So that really got me and so yeah, I made a documentary about that."

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