

coverstory

BY GEORGE DICKIE

Kale Culley, Jared Padalecki
and Violet Brinson (from left)



'Supernatural's' Jared Padalecki fights evildoers of a different stripe in The CW reboot 'Walker'

After 15 years as monster hunter Sam Winchester on "Supernatural," Jared Padalecki jumps right back into the series fray as star and executive producer of a series reboot upcoming on The CW.

In "Walker," an updated version of the 1993-2001 CBS actioner "Walker, Texas Ranger" that premieres Thursday, Jan. 21, the native Texan stars as title character Cordell Walker, a widower and father of two with his own moral code who returns home to Austin after two years of undercover work.

There, he encounters challenges of a different stripe: reconnecting with his creative son (Kale Culley, "Me, Myself and I") and rebellious daughter (Violet Brinson, "Sharp Objects"); negotiating clashes with his prosecutor brother (Keegan Allen, "Pretty Little Liars"), his perceptive mother (Molly Hagan, "Herman's Head") and traditional rancher father (Mitch Pileggi, "The X-Files"); and learning to work with his new partner (Lindsey Morgan, "The 100"), one of the first women in Texas Rangers history.

While this may have the same title character, occupation and setting, that is where the similarities with the original series end. This is a 21st century Walker, not a prequel or a story about a descendant. And with law enforcement problems dominating the news in recent months, Padalecki wanted to tell a positive story about police and "a law enforcement official

who kind of toes the line and who is often stuck between what he is bound to do and what he believes is right like so many of our men and women in blue do find themselves in."

"I've lived in Austin for 10 years with my wife and we have three kids now, and I love Austin," he continues. "I'm a proud Texan and there's a lot of good in Texas and I think people in Texas get an interesting rap, (it can be) bad sometimes. But Texas is also a character in this series, so (are) the places and the people and the towns and the vibe, and so I had an opportunity to tell a story about a place I love while living in the place I actually live."

Padalecki had a brief break between the two series. He wrapped filming of "Supernatural" in Vancouver in mid-September and started work on "Walker" in late October, giving him about six weeks to say goodbye to Sam Winchester and get into the headspace of Walker.

"I drove down from Vancouver in my truck that I've had the last eight years and I had my dog with me and did a little road trip to kind of exhale after finishing up that show," he reports. "And then I had another five weeks after that road trip to sit down and really focus in on Walker"

"I think I still probably am letting go of Sam Winchester," he adds. "I imagine I will be letting go of Sam Winchester for a long, long time."

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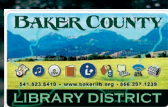
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