



coverstory
BY JAY BOBBIN

John Carroll Lynch stars in "Big Sky," premiering Tuesday on ABC.

'Big Sky' opens for ABC with premiere of serialized mystery

Television-producing veteran David E. Kelley has had successes in the worlds of cable and streaming, but he still has a soft spot for broadcast television.


Following "Big Little Lies," "Mr. Mercedes" and HBO's current "The Undoing," the "Ally McBeal," "The Practice" and "Picket Fences" alum is taking his latest project to ABC. Premiering Tuesday, Nov. 17, "Big Sky" adapts several related novels by C.J. Box by following the search for two sisters (played by Natalie Alyn Lind and Jade Pettyjohn) kidnapped from a Montana highway. Among the many other characters is a detective (Ryan Phillippe) who crosses paths with his ex-cop ex-wife (Katheryn Winnick, "Vikings") while working the case.

Also a writer of many "Big Sky" episodes, Kelley says that in adapting Box's "The Highway" into the show's main premise, "The biggest challenge for me was to be able to deliver what the book did ... and that is the tension, the thrill, the drama and the relational equations of the characters, which were rich and profound at times. It was a great ride, a great journey. And I'm hoping that particularly given the times, when (viewers) throw on the television at the end of the day, we will be able to deliver that sense of fun, drama, and escapism to them."

"Big Sky's" ensemble cast also includes Kylie Bunbury ("Pitch"), Brian Geraghty ("Chicago P.D."), Dedee Pfeiffer, Jesse James Keitel, Valerie Mahaffey and John Carroll Lynch ("American Horror Story"). Co-star Winnick vows that with all of the characters, "You'll see different layers of them as the series unfolds. The things that you least expect in a character end up shocking you, in a lot of different ways."

Playing a state trooper in "Big Sky," Lynch has been a series star for Kelley before ("The Brotherhood of Poland, New Hampshire"), and he maintains that he's been a fan ever since he visited friend Don Cheadle on the "Picket Fences" set. "Every single time I watch a David Kelley show, it is its own universe and it tackles its own question," Lynch reasons. "There's always humor. There's always heart. There's always an essential sense of humanity about each and every single universe that's created."

While there's never a guarantee that a serialized drama won't be canceled before it can play out fully, Kelley has built a safeguard into "Big Sky." He explains, "The structure of this show is that we will do four- or five-episode arcs, so if someone could only watch the first half of the season, there will be closure on one storyline. We kind of like that format as storytellers, because we cultivate and introduce an underlying story while we're going full guns on our 'A' story."



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