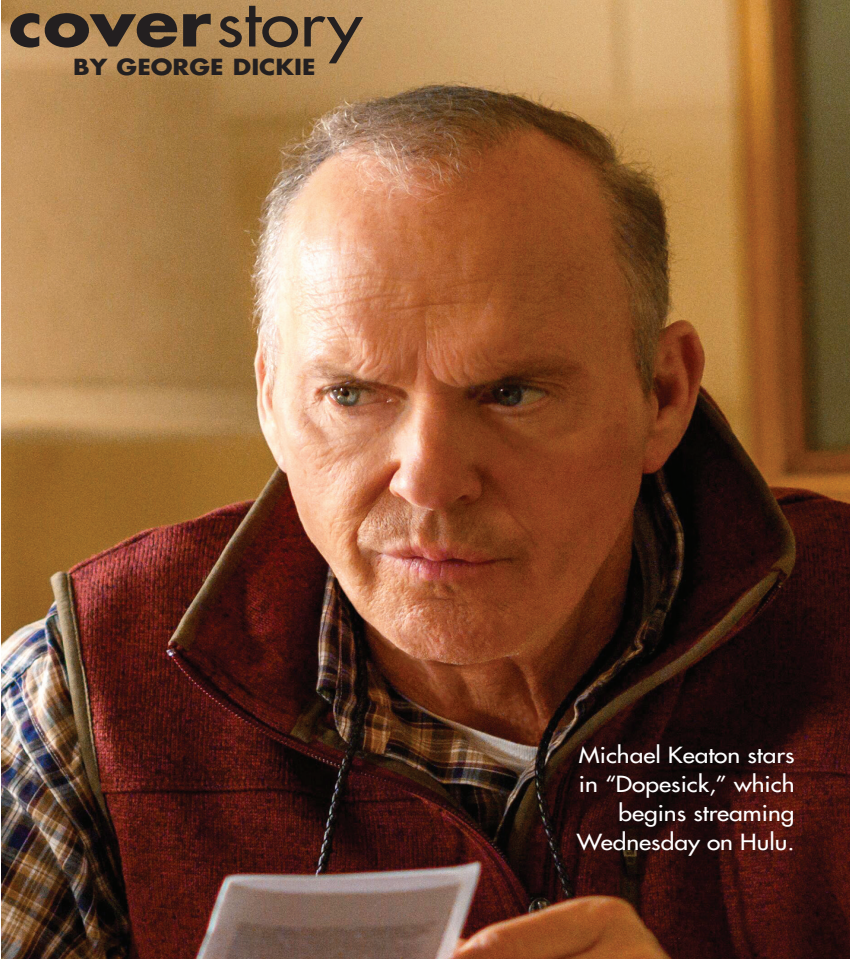


**coverstory**  
BY GEORGE DICKIE



Michael Keaton stars in "Dopesick," which begins streaming Wednesday on Hulu.

# Hulu's 'Dopesick' offers a 360-degree view of the opioid crisis

A talented cast and multiple perspectives help tell the story of the beginning of the opioid epidemic in a miniseries upcoming on Hulu.

In "Dopesick," an eight-episode series based on the bestselling book by Beth Macy that premieres Wednesday, Oct. 13, the story of the emergence of Oxycontin and the subsequent death, suffering and mayhem it caused is seen through the experiences of a well-meaning rural Virginia doctor (Michael Keaton) who prescribed it for an injured coal miner (Kaitlyn Dever); the chairman (Michael Stuhlbarg) of the pharmaceutical company that sees the drug as its financial salvation; the sales reps (Will Poulter, Philippa Soo) pitching the drug to doctors and hospitals; and the Department of Justice officials (Peter Sarsgaard, John Hoogenakker) and DEA agent (Rosario Dawson) investigating what went down.

At the heart of it, of course, is Oxycontin. It's an opioid and thus very addictive but the company's time-release formula was supposed to mitigate those qualities, making it the new miracle drug for sufferers of chronic pain. But like any narcotic, users develop a tolerance over time and require increasing dosages. Soon pharmacies are being robbed, lives are wrecked and people are dying. And the drug company is running for cover.

Meanwhile, an epidemic has taken hold, a familiar story that still plays out today.

"The ease with which it became epidemic kind of knocked me out," says Keaton, also an executive producer on the series. "It seemed almost too simple that this happened this way. ... To be honest, I'm reading (the script) and thinking, well, are we really — is this too on the head? And then you, after you read Beth Macy's book and you start to do any kind of research, then you realize this is not exaggerated in the slightest. But that's the expression, that's the thing for me, the ease with which all this happened was sickening."

The story demands attention as there is a lot here to digest. It jumps around in multiple timelines and does considerable character exposition. Pulling it all together was an enormous task but executive producer Danny Strong felt that to do it any other way wouldn't do the story justice.

"I really wanted to do something that felt like it was telling the totality of the story because I felt as if one story wasn't the full story ...." Strong explains. "My main goal was to expose what happened, the crimes that were committed ... and then to dramatize, in real-time, their victims. I thought by going back and forth between the people that are suffering (and) the people that are making these decisions, that feel like even petty decisions that they're making, could really shine a (light) on what they did and could also give a sense of empathy and understanding (for) people that are suffering from addiction."

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