

SPOTLIGHT Insider

Kelly Reilly as Maddie in *Little Wing*, streaming on Paramount+. Pictures: Alysson Riggs

What it is like to play TV's baddest bitch

FORGET TOUGH-AS-GUTS BETH DUTTON, KELLY REILLY'S NEW ROLE IS SWEET AS PIE – AND SHE'S IN LOVE

Kerry Parnell

Currently enjoying soar-away success in *Yellowstone*, Kelly Reilly says it was her new role, in a sweet coming-of-age movie, that made her soul fly.

Reilly, 46, who found worldwide fame as tough-talking Beth Dutton in Paramount's hit western TV drama, opposite Kevin Costner, appears in the endearing new film *Little Wing*, with Brooklynn Prince and Brian Cox.

The heartwarming flick follows teenager Kaitlyn attempting to come to terms with her parents' divorce.

The story takes an unlikely turn when she's given some pigeons and meets champion pigeon-racer Jaan, a Vietnam War veteran (Cox).

Beautifully shot on location in Portland, Oregon, the standout script is written by John Gatins, who also penned 2012's *Flight*, starring Reilly and Denzel Washington.

A passion project, the movie was inspired by an article in *The New Yorker*, and when Gatins showed it to Reilly, she says she fell in love with the tale.

"I love anything he writes," she tells *Insider*, over Zoom from New York. "It's just lovely and heartwarming."

"There's a real authenticity to this film – it's a coming-of-age story that feels truthful, with a little bit of edge to it. I was one of those gifts of a job for me, I really enjoyed it."

Reilly plays Maddie, a police officer and mother of two, struggling to pay the mortgage and keep the family home following her marriage break-up. She was reunited on-screen with Cox, who, she says, is nothing like *Succession*'s Logan Roy in real life. "I don't know how he does that persona, because in real life, he's such a sweetheart," she says.

"I've known Brian for a long time, over the years."

The star of the movie is 13-year-old Brooklynn Prince, who plays troubled teen Kaitlyn. The child actor, who has also appeared in *Cocaine Bear* and *The Turning*, is definitely one to watch. "She's a little powerhouse and incredibly smart," Reilly says.

"And she had such commitment – I found it really impressive that as a young actor, she just wants to tell a good story and be the best at her craft."

"She had an appetite for acting in a way I remember, when I was her age."



Kelly Reilly as Maddie and Brooklynn Prince as Kaitlyn in *Little Wing*.

“Being able to lose yourself in a role was like magic

Kelly Reilly

That energy is really nice to be around when you get a bit older. It's invigorating and beautiful to watch."

Reilly could be talking about herself. The British actor, who grew up just outside of London, began on 1990s police drama *Prime Suspect*, with Helen Mirren, before award-winning stage roles in *After Miss Julie* and *Othello*.

Appearing in *Sherlock Holmes*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Eden Lake*, her breakthrough role came in 2018, when she joined the *Yellowstone* cast.

Recently appearing with Kenneth Branagh in *A Haunting in Venice*, she is also starring in Robert Zemeckis's upcoming movie *Here with Tom Hanks*.

Married to financier Kyle Baugher and splitting her time between the UK and US, Reilly says *Little Wing* gave her pause to reflect on her own journey. "I did my first job when I was 16 and I remember that time so vividly," she says. "Being a young actor and feeling like I knew nothing,

but I was raw and up for it. I was just in love with the whole craft."

"I never went to drama school, I learned on the job. I wasn't confident like Brooklyn, I was very shy."

"Being able to lose yourself in a role was like magic. But I didn't feel like I was looking at myself, I was looking at this young woman and thinking, 'Good for her that she has that belief and confidence in herself'. I wish I had had more of that. It took me a while."

In fact, Reilly had to wait until her 40s to get her big break and describes herself as a "real character actor, doing play after play and films and TV, just really scrapping at it for so long". So, of all the parts she's played, is there a favourite she would like to revisit? No, she says, she'd never go back.

"I don't know if I'd want to revisit any, because they're different times in your life, aren't they?" she says.

"I definitely feel that once I've done one thing, I'm looking for another one that's different. Which is why, you know, on (*Yellowstone*) I've played this character for a long time, it's so nice to me to step off and play other characters and immerse myself in new worlds."

And with *Yellowstone* ending later this year, Reilly says what she really wants to do is return to the stage in London's West End. "I haven't been back on stage for a while and the London stage is calling," she says.

"That's where I cut my teeth, where I grew up. It's my passion."

Little Wing is now showing on Paramount+



Succession's Brian Cox as Jaan in *Little Wing*.