

When Jayme Pfahl, Gordon Mark and Harold Tichenor founded Crescent Entertainment 16 years ago, it made sense to them to create a company that combined service work and domestic production. However, in 1990 the domestic film and television industry was still relatively new. Crescent survived by taking service work, while at the same time continuing to develop its own projects.

CRESCENT ROLLS

At the time there were only a handful of people who had the experience and connections needed to start a production company. Fortunately for Crescent, Tichenor and Mark both fit that profile. Tichenor had been a director, editor and cinematographer for almost a quarter century and Mark came to the company having worked on several features including *First Blood*, and *Never Cry Wolf*. Joined by Pfahl, while all three were working on the series *Danger Bay*, the company grew rapidly. Within two years Crescent had produced two television series (*Monkey House* and *Lighting Force*) and a Canadian feature (*Showdown at Williams Lake*, a.k.a. *Kootenai Brown*.) >>>



Harold Tichenor, Nathan Tichenor and Jayme Pfahl. Photograph by Phillip Chin.

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The company hasn't slowed down. Pfahl says that funds have increased for Canadian television and film, and while financing homegrown projects has remained difficult, it's still possible. Two years ago, Crescent produced the mini-series *Terminal City* with writer/creator Angus Fraser. It went on to win six Leo awards, five Gemini nominations, two Directors Guild nominations and recognition from the Banff Television Festival.

Nathan Tichenor, who took over the position of managing director from Pfahl when the latter became president (Harold Tichenor has become a fulltime screenwriter), says the show has been selling well overseas with support from its London-based distributor Channel 4 International. And he says the cachet from the show, which tells the story of a family dealing with cancer, has helped to increase interest in the company and its projects.

"Thanks to the awards and great reception of *Terminal City* we've gotten the attention of international buyers and broadcasters for our projects in development," he says. "We are currently moving towards developing dramas that are along the lines of *Terminal City* in that they reflect the new international appetite for shows that push TV's traditional boundaries."

According to Pfahl, Crescent is in development with several projects including two with Angus Fraser. They include an eight hour drama called *Insurgency* that is being created for The Movie Network and Movie Central, and *The Secret Lives of Dog Catchers*, a comedy series being developed with CHUM Television. Crescent recently optioned David Bergen's Giller Prize-winning novel *The Time in Between* for which Harold Tichenor is writing the screenplay.

In addition, they have optioned a script for a "fun and fast paced thriller" called *3 A.M.* that is being

written by Vancouver's Jason Kelly. The company, along with Citadel Entertainment, is also adapting Mark Brownell's stage play *Monsieur d'Eon*, a historical drama about Benjamin Franklin's unlikely ally at the French Court, who was born a man but later decreed a woman by the king of France, and the series *Dark Nest* and *The Mental State*. Pfahl compares the Arctic-set *Dark Nest*, created by Ian Carpenter, to *Lost* and *Twin Peaks*. He says Toronto writer Tim Kilby's *The Mental State* is set "in a privately funded mental health centre where patients and staff engage in a battle of wills over whose side is right, exploring the fine line of reality that we teeter on every day."

According to Pfahl, the shows in development reflect the company's opinion that you don't have to look south to find good scripts. He says that the fact that all of the shows are being developed by Canadian writers, speaks well of the kind of homegrown talent that Crescent has been working with since its founding.

"It's our goal," he says, "to continue moving away from service work towards sustaining a company with our own projects. This is done by first building strong relationships with Canadian creative talent and developing new and exciting stories. And our strong history of production will allow those stories to be made and told. If there is a formula for success in film and television, it's this combination of fresh creative with strong production experience."



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