

TELEVISION

Dominic's dramatic fall and rise

Season Premiere

Da Vinci's Inquest

When and where: Tonight at 9 on CBC

Rating: ★★★½ (out of four)



Last we saw Dominic Da Vinci he was heading into the mayor's office for an interview for the chief of police job.

As season seven of *Da Vinci's Inquest* opens tonight we learn the lovable, liberal coroner doesn't get the job; instead, he gets drunk.

Don't worry, the boss Chris Haddock (creator and writer) said I could reveal the resolve of season six's cliffhanger.

But don't feel bad for Da Vinci (Nicholas Campbell). Like his real-life counterpart Mayor Larry Campbell — who also acts as a consultant on the show — he may have been passed over for the top cop job but his future looks bright as his career will take a giant leap forward.

"It's going to happen next season," said Haddock, who has pushed his mouthpiece Da Vinci to become more political with each season. "He's going to be heading for the mayor's chair."

According to Haddock the new show will likely be called *Da Vinci's City Hall* and it will be an evolution of the current show, not a spinoff of the *Law & Order* or *CSI* kind.

"It will have all the characters we know and love, it's just now it will move up from the street level to the boardrooms, council chambers, penthouses and office buildings where decisions are made," said Haddock.

The transformation of Da Vinci is a direct result of the character's, well, character and how he looks at his work and the mark he is leaving on the city and the neighbourhood he cares so deeply about.

Da Vinci continues to have a lot

This season, Da Vinci falls off wagon but look for him in mayor's chair in a year



Series stars Ian Tracey, Nicholas Campbell and Venus Terzo.

ideas about how to deal with the Downtown Eastside. He is still the champion of the unpopular ideas of needle exchanges and an official red-light district.

"He's had to confront both a glass ceiling with his work and confront his own temper and temperament," said Haddock. "He has forced himself to become more conciliatory and political. But he realizes he still needs challenges.

He's one of those guys who needs dragons to fight."

This season there are dragons, both on the job and in his personal life.

"He's back and he's under pressure," said Haddock about Da Vinci, who falls back off the wagon with a thunderous and introspective crash.

"I don't see it as that much darker, it's just normal to me," laughed Haddock about the opening two episodes that see Da Vinci suffer and a Vancouver cop beat a young drug dealer to death.

"OK, I guess it's darker what with the kid getting the beating," said Haddock, who added he's

not worried about upsetting the police with this graphic characterization. "I actually think police see the argument no matter what side you come down on it. There are bad people and good people on every job.

"I think what this does is get the discussion going. It's everywhere. It should be talked about."

While *Da Vinci's* continues to mine the darkness that envelops the country's poorest neighbourhood even during midday, it is not without humour. Albeit, it's often morose humour.

Take, for instance, the death of a guy trying to rip off a cable signal.

"The coroner's office usually doesn't collaborate with the cable company," Da Vinci tells a neighbour of the dead guy who himself is worried that Da Vinci will rat him out to the cable company.

"A death is a death and they are all tragic. It's just some are more absurd than others," said Haddock. "We try to mix it up."

It's that contrast and how it is viewed and processed by the multi-layered and almost always conflicted Da Vinci that gives this show the type of depth and insight that is often hard to find on regular network TV.

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Campbell relishes free rein from CBC 'suits'

Nicholas Campbell sees his personal life in the new season of *Da Vinci's Inquest* take a nosedive.

As the season opens, he stumbles off his proverbial wagon once more, getting outrageously drunk on a couple of occasions. In addition, he's been having spells of dizziness and forgetfulness. What does this portend for series creator Chris Haddock's ambitious plotline for him?

"Yeah, that's kind of interesting, eh?" Campbell says. "I got kind of concerned when I read that. Of course he won't tell me about that."

Campbell does seem pleased, though, to have Haddock back in harness this year, after his brief sojourn to Los Angeles where he gave a U.S. cop series a try. But *The Handler* didn't survive last season on CBS, amid rumours the American producers wanted something with a little more octane than the subtler kind of drama

Haddock was delivering. "He never believed me," Campbell says. "I said 'Chris, we're never going to have this again. We're never going to have a situation where they're really not on our case at all.'"

He says the CBC "suits" have given *Da Vinci's Inquest* free rein and wishes they could be like that with other writers and producers, too. He indicates that if Francis Ford Coppola were making *The Godfather* today, he'd be doing it for HBO, the American pay-cable broadcaster famous for letting its creative talent be creative.

As for the paucity of good home-grown series drama on Canadian TV, Campbell says it may become necessary to learn how to do things even more efficiently. But it's also important to convince the executives at CTV and Global that doing "Canadian stuff" is worth something, not just an altruistic gesture.

— CP