

# PLAYBACK

## Search & Rescue in the hunt for viewers

By: Ilona Beiks

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VANCOUVER -- The producers of *Search & Rescue*, a West Coast action-drama based on the lives of four members of the Coast Guard, is hoping to lure viewers away from the U.S. competition when it airs on Global in March.

Executive producer and creator Raymond Storey (*Wind at My Back*) recalls being approached by prodco Halifax Film three and half years ago.

"They wanted a series that could go head-to-head with the U.S. competition, and they presented me with an article on the Coast Guard, which I knew nothing about," he says.

The \$20-million primetime series, a coproduction between Brightlight Pictures' Steve Hegyes and Shawn Williamson and Halifax Film's Charles Bishop and Michael Donovan, has set up "base camp" on the waterfront in Squamish, a small town which 15,000 call home, a 50-kilometer drive from Vancouver along the Sea to Sky Highway.

Cameras began rolling Sept. 24, and Storey is aiming for a February wrap. "Thank God Vancouver's crews are adept at filming in the rain," he says, laughing.

It's the first time a series has been completely headquartered in Squamish (though Anne Heche's *Men in Trees* does location shots there), bringing about 100 staffers, cast and crew members with it.

According to Storey, the producers looked at various coastal locations throughout Canada and B.C. "But the practicalities of shooting in Squamish far outweighed other locations," he explains. "The scenery of ocean and mountains is stunning, which will be visually appealing to an international audience, and there is a sense of wilderness and danger, yet Vancouver is only a 40- to 50-minute drive away, making it easier for casting and more livable for cast and crew."

Another key factor is the ability to work with the real Canadian Armed Forces and Coast Guard. "We couldn't afford to buy the equipment or get it to a more remote location. They're hands-off, but they're offering expertise and manpower," he says. "You can't make up this stuff -- it's a big learning curve for all of us on the show, from writer to director to actor."

What he can -- and has -- made up is what Storey describes as "an action-oriented show. It's definitely adult, built for the 10 o'clock primetime drama slot."

The show delves into the lives of four members of a Canadian search-and-rescue team serving in the Pacific Northwest. "The series explores the stories of these four imperfect, deeply flawed heroes with dysfunctional lives," played by Jeremy Guilbaut (*Edgemont*), Zoie Palmer (*Instant Star*), Claudette Mink (*The Days*) and Steve Bacic (*Andromeda*), explains Storey.

He says the series is "uniquely Canadian, and I'm not apologizing for it being Canadian. We have a talent base, skill base, and we've been doing it for U.S. productions for years. Why not do it for us? I think it will have an international appeal, but in Canada, you first hope for a returning season."