

Sponsor's News

PMP Joins Forces to Become Sextant Entertainment Group

Pacific Motion Pictures has joined forces with four other players in the industry to form Sextant Entertainment Group. PMP's new bedfellows are Pan Pacific Productions (animation), New City Productions, Reel Elements (visual effects), and THA & Associates (distribution and foreign sales).

For their part PMP will now focus on family-oriented television product such as the mini-series *Voyage of the Unicorn*, directed by Phil Spink and currently in production. On the development slate are two teen series, *Brock Vegas Sucks* and *Crusade*. Vegas, a "pop-art dramedy soap set in a surreal world," is the creation of Canadian art directors Robyn Huth and Sam Straigton which marries live action to animation; while *Crusade* is a "techno-medieval" live-action show with extensive special effects. Both are great examples of the advantage PMP has by its new partnership, with each division bringing their unique talents to the table then working together to bring product to the screen. As PMP Principle Tom Rowe tells me, "Consolidation is a fact of life, and we can accomplish more by looking to partners that complement our overall plan."

Both series are also great examples of PMP's commitment to Canadian talent and their ability to go beyond borders to find it and nurture it. *Crusade* was created at home then marketed abroad, resulting in the first ever CBC-Disney International (U.K.) development deal. VP of Development Tara Twigg then discovered the brilliant Canadian writing team of Kelly Senecal and Rob Baird working in L.A. and hired them to write the first few shows. But with neither CBC nor Disney able to match the budget, PMP must now look further afield for production funds.

It's precisely such market realities that makes Rowe careful to distinguish between "indigenous" and "independent" productions. Canadian producers are finding out more and more that they must look to international partners if they want to make quality product and get it on the air. Remember what happened to *Due South* when it lost its American broadcaster? It got cancelled – until a deal with the Germans saved the day. Similarly, when Twigg failed to find Canadian interest for her true story about the unlikely love affair between famed New York socialite Edith Iglauer and B.C. fisherman John Daly, Twigg went south. The resulting MOW, *Navigating the Heart*, starring Jacqueline Smith, aired on Lifetime this past Valentine's Day (and earned Twigg a Co-Producer credit).

Consequently Sextant's business plan intends to make good use of international co-production treaties, with deals in the works with Britain and even Iran. Sextant will also make good use of Canadian tax credits, but not public money. Instead its strength will lie in its partnership with THA & Associates, headed by the reputable and well-respected Tom Howe, giving PMP and partners immediate access to the international market. THA & Associates will also distribute other company's product, infusing Canada with a sorely needed additional lifeline to the world.

Exactly how and to what extent this new merger will affect the Canadian industry only the future will tell, but there's no doubt in this writer's mind that Sextant is primed to become one of the doors to come knocking on.

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