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## Canadian producer celebrates 'Fargo' Emmy win

By Laura Kane The Canadian Press



Matthias Clamer/AP This photo released by FX Networks shows Billy Bob Thornton as Lorne Malvo in "Fargo," season one.

TORONTO – When the time came for the outstanding miniseries award to be announced at the Emmy Awards on Monday night, Canadian producer Chad Oakes was starting to get nervous.

“Fargo,” the moody Calgary-shot FX series based on Joel and Ethan Coen’s 1996 film, was nominated for a whopping 18 trophies but had only won two up until that moment.

“It wasn’t looking very good, let’s put it that way. You go into these things with fingers crossed, zero expectations,” said Oakes, reached by phone Tuesday in Los Angeles.

“When they said the F word, ‘Fargo,’ it was a great moment. This was a tough show but nothing is easy if you want to make something great. Everyone poured their heart into it and did it for the right reasons and we’re very proud.”

Oakes, 46, joined showrunner Noah Hawley and several of the show’s producers onstage at the Nokia Theatre to accept the award. Fellow Canadian producers Michael Frislev and Kim Todd also took the podium.

“Fargo” also nabbed a trophy for Colin Bucksey’s direction at the awards show Monday, while Canadian Jackie Lind won for her casting of the series at the Creative Arts Emmys earlier this month.

Actors Billy Bob Thornton, Martin Freeman, Allison Tolman and Colin Hanks were all nominated for their performances on “Fargo.” Freeman wound up taking a trophy home for his role on a different series, BBC One’s “Sherlock.”

Of the roughly 165 crew members that work on “Fargo,” which airs north of the border on FXX Canada, some 135 are Canadian, according to Oakes. The show also boasts many Canadian actors in supporting roles.

“Fargo” has been picked up by FX and MGM for another season and shooting begins in January. Oakes said the show was always conceived of as a miniseries and it was a challenging concept to execute.

“We had to take on 10 one-hour movies. Every single episode wasn’t structured like an episode of television. It had a beginning, a middle and an end,” he said.

“We had high expectations to make sure we didn’t screw it up,” he added. “The Coen brothers made this iconic movie in 1996 and we had to make sure that we did it justice. There were a lot of both personal and financial and weather issues that all had to come together to make it work. We’re very pleased at the end result and happy the Academy feels the same.”

He added that the original plan was to shoot “Fargo” in Winnipeg, but the record-setting Canadian winter led them to film the series exclusively in Calgary.

“There were one or two weeks that it was colder in Winnipeg than it was on Mars, so everyone was happy with the decision,” he said. “There are A-list crews (in Calgary) and those direct flights back and forth between Calgary and Los Angeles, or Calgary and London, makes it a great destination to shoot.”

Oakes was born and raised in Calgary and embarked on his career in 1995, a year before “Fargo” was released. He called himself a “big Coen brothers fan” and said he felt honoured to work on the series.

“When you respect somebody’s body of work or respect people’s creative intelligence, and then you’re asked to take one of their beloved babies and help make it into something else in a different medium, which is a TV series or miniseries... We’re very pleased that it all turned out,” he said.

He thanked Hawley, MGM and FX for trusting him and his business partner Frislev with the series. Monday’s Emmy marks a third win for Oakes and Frislev after they captured awards for “The Incredible Mrs. Ritchie” in 2004 and “Broken Trail” in 2007.

“It gives us the assurance that we’re on the right track of making some wonderful films. We got into this because we love our medium. We love telling stories, whether it’s making people laugh, making people scared or making people cry,” said Oakes.

“It’s difficult. The film business is just that, a business. So when you can marry the creative and the business side together and you can be acknowledged, it’s a good thing.”