



Ian Tracey (left) and Venus Terzo (middle) get the goods; Nicholas Campbell as Da Vinci

Canadian power

Has Dominic Da Vinci gone upmarket? For six seasons, the combative coroner on *Da Vinci's Inquest* was right at home mucking around the back alleys of the nation's nastiest 'hood, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. But it looks like Da Vinci, played by Nicholas Campbell, is moving on up. He'll still be mucking around, but it's dirt of a different kind: politics.

There's definitely a "shift of focus" this season, says series creator-writer-director Chris Haddock. "We're trying to show how power works, the relationships between people and how



things are done behind closed doors."

Watching Da Vinci rage against the machine over the years, usually with little impact, you wish he had the power to really make a difference. Last year, he tried to get in the game by making a run for the police chief's chair. He cleaned up his act – shaved his stubble, cut his hair, ironed his trademark trench coat – and bit his tongue when he was tempted to run off at the mouth.

That's not to say he didn't vent in private. The opening episode featured his usual caustic commentary on social issues. When a colleague told him she was seeing an unusually large number of older women on the streets, he said, "It's probably due to the cutbacks at Women's Services. I told them."

As it turns out, the clean act failed. Too much murky water under the bridge that long divided the crusty coroner and City Hall cost him the gig. He's now discovering there are sinister forces working against him, and it's all about politics. But Haddock tells

me it's not over for Da Vinci: he sets his sights higher than police chief.

"All the characters are undergoing difficult transitions," says Haddock. "We're escalating the [professional] and personal stakes for the whole cast." Kosmo (Venus Terzo) gets entangled in a smear campaign; Kurtz (Sarah Jane Redmond) gets manipulated by the new police chief; Leary (Ian Tracey) gets personal; Shannon (Donnelly Rhodes) and McNab (Stephen E. Miller) feel the squeeze with offers of early retirement.

McNab, who looks like a hybrid of Don Cherry and Don Rickles, is the perfect foil for Da Vinci. The two bicker like old marrieds but there's an underlying mutual respect. Besides, they need each other, and McNab hopes to ride the coroner's coattails to the big time.

Da Vinci's Inquest isn't as technically slick as the formulaic *Law & Order* or *CSI* (a show Haddock has derided in the past as "bogus"). But it tackles the same issues and makes the same statements in a quiet, no-frills way that's just as effective – a uniquely Canadian style that we get. 