

How Bell Media, eOne talked up *Cardinal* at home and abroad

The six-part mystery thriller has been the subject of a lengthy consumer-facing campaign in Canada and an industry-focused one abroad.

[By Jordan Pinto](#)

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With many of Bell Media's long-running series entering their final seasons – including *Orphan Black*, *19-2* and *Saving Hope* – the media co is looking to put its promotional weight behind its newer properties.

“For a two-year period we were in a stage of sustaining publicity and awareness for existing series, so this year we've had the opportunity to work on a slate of new programming,” Scott Henderson, VP communications, Bell Media, told *Playback Daily*.

Among those is CTV's six-part mystery thriller *Cardinal*, produced by eOne and Sienna Films, which premiered Jan. 25 at 10 p.m. In terms of marketing spend, the series has received as big a promotional push as any of Bell Media's recent launches, according to Jon Arklay, SVP, Bell Media Agency, brand, creation, and marketing. This includes Discovery original series *Frontier*, CraveTV's *Billions* and Kiefer Sutherland-starrer *Designated Survivor*, which *Cardinal* is replacing in the CTV schedule while the U.S. show is on midseason hiatus.

For the launch of *Cardinal*, Bell Media has also for the first time engaged a group of social media influencers – or those with large, engaged social followings – to promote the show on their various platforms. The company has looked to a model used by U.S. broadcasters in which they promote their content by having a broad swathe of social influencers post/re-post content related to the series, such as tweets from the show's stars, in the lead up to launch. Bell Media hired strategist Jennifer Ettinger in order to handle the PR campaign, which saw influencers being chosen based on the size of their followings as well as their involvement in the entertainment space. This includes Prasanna Ranganathan, an Ottawa-based Huffington Post contributor and human rights lawyer with a Twitter following of 10,500, Tommy Geraci, a New York-based social media strategist and writer with a following of 41,000, and Chris Boddy, a Toronto-based policeman with 39,500 followers.

The aim of the campaign was to reach mystery/suspense lovers within CTV's broad 18-to-54 year-old target demo in a more organic way than simply posting from social media accounts set up specifically to promote a certain series.

The series was also given an unusually lengthy promotion period in order to familiarize viewers with the lead characters, played by Billy Campbell (*The Killing*) and Karine Vanasse (*Paul à Québec*, *The Forbidden Room*), said Arklay. TV spots for the series bowed during the Grey Cup in November and later ran during the 2016 World Junior Ice Hockey Championships (on TSN), while a 60-second spot during the Golden Globes in early January.

Adapted for TV by showrunner Aubrey Nealon, the series is based on the novel by Canadian Giles Blunt. The series is launching simultaneously on CTV and Bell Media's French-language channel Super Ecran.

While Bell Media has been promoting the series in Canada, eOne has been also been building industry-focused awareness for the series internationally as it looks to drum up interest and bolster the property's market value to potential buyers across the globe, said Caroline Stott, EVP, global marketing, eOne Television International.

The show, for which eOne handles all international sales, was introduced as a teaser to buyers at an eOne market preview event in London early in 2016, followed by campaigns at MIPTV in April at the L.A. screenings in May. eOne then officially launched its international push with a trailer for the series at Cannes in October, where it also previewed *Mary Kills People* and *Ransom*. Most recently, the global studio has secured a spot for *Cardinal* at next month's Berlinale's European Film Market, which runs from February 13 to 17.

eOne will also soon be announcing deals with major international broadcasters, according to Stott.

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