



Michael Raymond-James as Britt Pollack and Donal Logue as Hank Dolworth in *Terriers*, premiering on FX

# Dogged Pursuit

In FX's new *Terriers*, Donal Logue and Michael Raymond-James try to catch bad guys without growing into tired old dogs.

BY STEWART SCHLEY

In Shawn Ryan's gripping FX series *The Shield*, tough-guy cop Vik Mackey (Michael Chiklis) was the Los Angeles Police Department version of a snarling Doberman, poised to pounce – and bite – whenever someone violated his very personal interpretation of justice.

*Terriers* – Ryan's latest contribution to FX – is also about solving crimes in Southern California. But the hour-long show's two main characters are breeds away from the gritty street ethos Chiklis personified. Instead, think lovable mutt: a mix of lackadaisical and loyal, with just enough

charm in the DNA to make you want to reach out and scratch them behind the ears – even after they've misbehaved.

It's a delicate balancing act, especially for a television network that has made a living off of highly original, critically acclaimed dark-side dramas like *The Shield* and *Sons of Anarchy*. But the lighter-toned *Terriers*, which premieres this fall on FX, has some seriously adept handlers working the leash.

It's executive-produced by Ryan, whose ability to invent nuanced, complicated and convincingly human characters not only made *The Shield* a riveting dramatic work, but almost single-handedly ushered in an era of breakthrough original cable network programming. Ryan's co-executive producer and the show's creator is Ted Griffin, who wrote the film screenplays for *Ocean's Eleven* and the absorbing Ridley Scott crime drama *Matchstick Men*. Film and TV director Craig Brewer (*Hustle and Flow*, *The Shield*) directed the premiere episode.

In *Terriers*, the Hollywood impresarios are teaming up to recreate the buddy show with a modern, slightly acerbic bent, weaving moments of comedy and camaraderie into thick, solve-the-mystery plots. The series leans heavily on the performances of its main actors,

Michael Raymond-James and Donal Logue, whose characters team up in a sort of slacker-esque private investigation business in San Diego. They're unlicensed professionally, and uncertain about exactly how to behave as grown-ups (avoidance of responsibility and commitment are recurring themes here). It's the big brother/little brother relationship between them that delivers the emotional juice behind *Terriers*, says Raymond-James, who plays the not-so-grounded little brother figure, Britt Pollack.

"It's a funny relationship, but it's also very touching," says Raymond-James, who earned accolades for his role of a Cajun psychopath in HBO's *True Blood* after appearing in Brewer's emotionally charged 2006 movie *Black Snake Moan*. "But it does very much hinge on the relationship between Donal's character and mine. His character for me is a big brother, best friend, father figure all rolled into this one dude who I would take a bullet for."

That on-camera relationship draws on a real-life friendship between the two actors, who shared a rented beach house in San Diego for five months as *Terriers* was filmed, spending their evenings playing guitar and running over the next day's lines.

Raymond-James met the Irish-Canadian Logue in 2008 on the set of NBC's detective show *Life*, and there was an almost immediate kinship.

"He was walking around with a Jack Kerouac book called *Big Sur* when I met him," Raymond-James says. "He was trying to adapt it into a screenplay. And for me, Kerouac – along with Hunter S. Thompson, William Burroughs, Lenny Bruce – all those writers moved furniture around in my brain. Donal's just a natural storyteller and great conversationalist. We just hit it off, and a lot of our personal friendship translates to the screen."

Logue plays Hank Dolworth, an ex-cop who is newly sober, newly divorced and not-so-newly jaded.

"Hank feels he has very little to lose, and that frees him in an amazing way to take action like he never has before," says Logue, who played the title character in the 2000 film *The Tao of Steve* and starred in the FOX/WB sitcom *Grounded for Life*.

In the premiere episode of *Terriers*, Britt and Hank team up to investigate the disappearance of a friend's daughter, encountering a shady real estate developer and stumbling across a murder along the way. TV writer Brian Ford Sullivan of *TheFutonCritic.com* called it a "wonderfully shaggy show" peppered with clever banter between the two underdog investigators. The "shaggy" tag also aptly describes the physical appearance of Logue's character, whose long red hair and unkempt beard give him a sort of Jeff Bridges *Big Lebowski* look. "I like the fact that I was allowed to kind of look like I do in my everyday life," says Logue. "Scruffy, not pretty."

An uncredited character in the series is the city of San Diego, which offers a fresh counterpoint to the more familiar New York/Los Angeles/Miami urbanism of many TV crime shows. But *Terriers* offers a different view of San Diego than the prevailing postcard impressions of sunny beaches and blond beauties.

Logue, who grew up 120 miles to the east in El Centro, says the show displays a more genuine San Diego, with attention paid to its ethnic richness, and with scenes shot in working-class neighborhoods like Ocean Beach.



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## Art Imitating Life

Age, friendship and experience have created a relationship between Donal Logue (left) and Michael Raymond-James not unlike their on-screen characters. Donal is a veteran of the screen, a Sundance Special Grand Jury Prize winner, who has been acting steadily since his first break in the 1992 film *Sneakers*, when Raymond-James was 15. For his part, Raymond-James' career steadily has been picking up steam since he was first noticed in director Craig Brewer's critically acclaimed *Black Snake Moan*.

"San Diego is a beautiful city with its own distinct culture," he says. "And it's a massive American city that sits right across the fence from a massive and wild Mexican city."

As they chase bad buys, swap jokes and ruminate about life, these two real-life terriers offer a prime-time glimpse into the American middle-aged zeitgeist, where regret and uncertainty meet up with an essential, enduring and youthful willingness to hope. To Raymond-James, *Terriers* captures a sort of Peter Pan limbo many men inhabit. "It's the charming rogues who never quite want to grow up," he says.

Logue says Hank "is ultimately an optimist and a fighter, despite his tendencies to self-loathing and criticism. He is regretting the past, while trying to convince himself he is excited about the freedom the future holds."

That's not exactly *Starsky and Hutch* breeziness, but it's not supposed to be. On paper, at least, *Terriers* is that rare animal that scuffs around the intersection of light-heartedness and existential angst. That makes it risky television, but it also might just make it (doggone) great television. ■

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