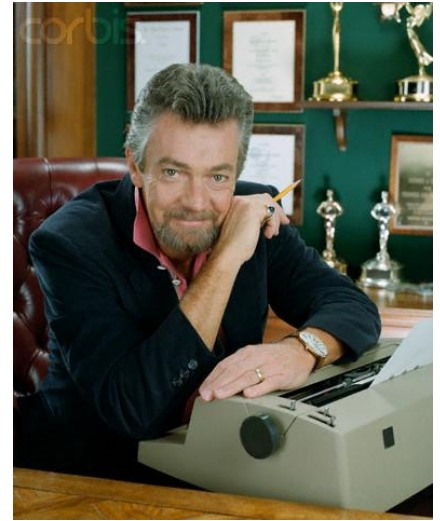


## STEPHEN J. CANNELL, 1941-2010

Stephen J(oseph) Cannell was born February 5, 1941 to Joseph Cannell, a Pasadena, California entrepreneur. Cannell struggled through his early school years, flunking three different grades of elementary, junior or senior high school, and regularly failing his English classes. Years later, when having one of his own children tested for dyslexia, he discovered that he had suffered from it his entire life. Never the less, he had a passionate love for writing, despite his difficulties with the written word, and set a goal for himself to become a best-selling author.



After attending the University of Oregon on a football scholarship and meeting creative writing teachers that bolstered his confidence, Cannell married his high school sweetheart and went to work for his family's business – driving a furniture truck all day. In the evenings, he set a rigorous writing schedule for himself – writing 5 hours a day, 7 days a week, on spec. He decided that his target market would be the burgeoning television scene, and after 6 years without a sale, he finally sold a script – to the series **Ironside**. After a few more sales, he caught the eye of the legendary writer/producer Jack Webb, who first hired him to be story editor and ultimately head writer for **Adam-12**. Cannell was contracted to Universal Television, writing and producing shows for that studio during the early-to-mid 1970s. While there, he produced **Chase** and wrote for and produced **Toma**, about real-life New York City detective David Toma. While producing **Toma**, Cannell and his mentor Roy Huggins (creator of **Maverick**, and many other tv series) wrote an episode that ended up getting rewritten to serve as a pilot for a series about an unorthodox Southern California P.I. named James Rockford. The series **The Rockford Files** ended up running for six seasons, and earned Cannell his only Emmy Award (though he was nominated a total of 6 times). Cannell's work at Universal led to the creation of **Baretta**, **Baa Baa Black Sheep**, **City of Angels**, **The Duke** and **Stone**.

In 1979, feeling that he wanted more ownership of the series he was creating and producing, Cannell left Universal to found Stephen J. Cannell Productions, for which he is perhaps most often recognized from the credits blurb at the end of his shows – he's at the typewriter typing, rips out the piece of paper and tosses it into the air, and it animatedly floats down into the "C" logo for his company. His first series as an independent producer, **Tenspeed and Brown Shoe** (starring Ben Vereen and Jeff Goldblum), brought him critical acclaim, but only lasted 13 episodes. Cannell had slightly better success (3 seasons) with his next series, **The Greatest American Hero**, then hit the big time with the smash hit **The A-Team** in 1983. His production studio then launched a series of successful series, including **Hardcastle and McCormick**, **Riptide**, **Hunter**, and **Stingray**. When the new FOX network decided to expand into drama series programming, their first offering (and first big hit) was Cannell's **21 Jump Street**, which launched the career of Johnny Depp. At one time during this period, The Cannell Studios had six series in simultaneous production, and was the third largest production house in Los Angeles, employing over 2000 people.



In the late 1980s, in a cost-cutting measure, Cannell founded film production facilities in Vancouver and moved most of his series production to Canada. Also during that period, Cannell was one of the earliest (and most successful) producers to create made-for-syndication action series, including **Renegade**. Cannell occasionally acted, appearing regularly as a bad guy on **Renegade**, and as the host of both **Scene of the Crime** and **U.S. Customs Classified**.

Following the elimination of the *Financial Interest and Syndication Rules* in 1993, which made it possible for television networks to own their own series, and which made it more difficult for

independent television producers to turn a profit, Cannell turned his eyes back towards his original goal of becoming a best-selling novelist, and released his first novel, The Plan, in 1995. By the release of his 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, he began appearing on the New York Times bestsellers list and has remained there for each of his subsequent novels. Cannell's regular television production basically ended in 1999 with the final season of **Silk Stalkings**. With his 6<sup>th</sup> novel, The Tin Collectors, Cannell introduced his first recurring character, Los Angeles police investigator Shane Scully – Scully has gone on to appear in 10 novels, including Cannell's final novel, The Prostitute's Ball, released two weeks after his death.

In addition to the larger-than-life quality of his fictional characters, and a penchant for snappy dialog in his fiction, Cannell was well known in the industry for being generous with his time and advice for up-and-coming writers and screenwriters. On the internet, you will find numerous audio files, YouTube (and other) video clips, and text files in which Stephen J. Cannell provides interviews and guidelines for both writing and how to “make it” in the world of Hollywood. He also became a spokesman on the topic of dyslexia, commenting on how it influenced his life. At the time of his death, he was still married to his high-school sweetheart, Marcia, and was also survived by children Tawnia, Cody and Chelsea. His first son, Derek, died in 1981 in a tragic accident.

#### **AWARDS:**

*Emmy Award*, 1978, for the 4<sup>th</sup> season of **The Rockford Files**. *The WGA Award* for the pilot of **Tenspeed and Brown Shoe**. *The Saturn Award – Life Career Award* from the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Films. *The Marlowe Lifetime Achievement Award* from the Mystery Writers of America. *The Paddy Chayefsky Laurel Award* for Television Writing Achievement from the Writers Guild of America (2006). *The NATPE Brandon Tartikoff Legacy Award* (2007). And the *Final Draft Hall of Fame Award* (2008). Cannell has a star on the *Hollywood Walk of Fame*, just down the street from his own office building.

#### **TV series created, co-created and/or produced by SJC:**

Adam-12 [1968-75]

Toma [1973-74]

Chase [1973-74]

The Rockford Files [1974-80]

Baretta [1975-78]

Baa Baa Black Sheep/Black Sheep

Squadron [1976-78]

City of Angels [1976]

Richie Brockelman, Private

Investigator [1978]

The Duke [1979]

Stone [1979-80]

Tenspeed and Brown Shoe [1980]

The Greatest American Hero [1981-83]

The Quest [1982-83]

The A-Team [1983-87]

Hardcastle and McCormick [1983-86]

The Rousters [1983-84]

Riptide [1984-86]

Hunter [1984-1991]

The Last Precinct [1985]

Stingray [1985-87]

21 Jump Street [1986-91]

Wiseguy [1987-90]

J.J. Starbuck [1987-88]

Sonny Spoon [1988-89]

UNSUB [1988-89]

Booker [1989-90]

Top of the Hill [1989-90]

Broken Badges [1990-91]

The 100 Lives of Black Jack Savage

[1990-91]

Palace Guard [1991]

Scene of the Crime [1991-92]

Personals [1991-92]

Silk Stalkings [1991-99]

The Commish [1991-95]

Street Justice [1991-93]

Renegade [1992-96]

The Hat Squad [1992-93]

Missing Persons [1993-94]

Cobra [1993-94]

Traps [1994]

Hawkeye [1994-95]

Marker [1994-95]

U.S. Customs Classified [1995-96]

Profit [1996]

Two [1996-97]

#### **Cannell's "Shane Scully" novels:**

The Tin Collectors [2000]

The Viking Funeral [2001]

Hollywood Tough [2002]

Vertical Coffin [2004]

Cold Hit [2005]

White Sister [2006]

Three Shirt Deal [2009]

On the Grind [2009]

The Pallbearers [2010]

The Prostitute's Ball [2010]

#### **Cannell's stand-alone novels:**

The Plan [1995]

Final Victim [1996]

King Con [1997]

Riding the Snake [1998]

The Devil's Workshop [1999]

Runaway Heart [2003]

At First Sight [2008]