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SHINING EXAMPLE

Danny and Jack Fisher started out as film-makers but were sidetracked by their New York post-production operation. Now, reports **MELANIE RODIER**, they are looking to balance business and creativity

When Danny and Jack Fisher made their first film, 1984 feature documentary *The Generation Apart*, they thought it would remain a family affair.

"We made a film and thought we'd show it in our basement to 12 people," says Danny Fisher, CEO of New York-based City Lights. The film, which explores the impact of the Holocaust on the families of survivors, won wide critical acclaim, was broadcast on PBS in the US and aired internationally.

The Fisher brothers — a third brother, Joe, also works for the company — decided to stay in the film business. They began producing commercials, corporate films and documentaries through City Lights, the company they started in 1982. Eight years ago, they started a post-production division which thrived and has become one of the largest such facilities in the US.

Despite their success, Danny and Jack decided four years ago that it was time to reassess the direction of the company, whose headquarters are located on several floors of an 11-storey midtown Manhattan office building.

"We had developed a thriving business, but it was primarily post-production," says Danny. "We had started out as film-makers, but became businessmen. We decided to become film-makers again."

With "a vision to have a creative enterprise and run it as a business", the brothers launched a film division, which executive produced John Waters' comedy *A Dirty Shame* for New Line Cinema and produced supernatural thriller *Tamara* for Lionsgate. New projects include *Descent* and *The Ten*, which gets its world premiere at Sundance. In development is

Interrupted, a drama co-written by Danny and based on the memoir of his early mentor, director Nicholas Ray.

A TV division, launched in 2003, last year produced more than 100 episodes of programming for 25 US networks.

The company recently moved into distribution, sealing a deal with WEA Corp, Warner Music's US sales and retail marketing company, for the US video and digital distribution of City Lights' feature films, television, documentary and special interest programming. There are also plans for international co-productions and a European office.

"I feel we are on a path to be a major indie studio," Fisher says. "I look at the indies now — almost all except for Lionsgate are associated with studios. So there is a tremendous opportunity for fresh players."



Danny Fisher

LOWDOWN: CITY LIGHTS' SLATE

Interrupted (in development): directed by Philip Kaufman (*Quills*), written by Danny and Jack Fisher. The final years of film-maker Nicholas Ray, based on his memoir, *I Was Interrupted*.

Descent (in post): directed by Talia Lugacy, produced by Morris S Levy's MEGA Films, produced by and starring Rosario Dawson. Drama thriller about a college co-ed who struggles to rebuild her life after being raped.

The Ten (in post): directed by David Wain, starring Paul Rudd, Jessica Alba, Winona Ryder, Adam Brody, Famke Janssen and Gretchen Mol. Comedy spoof of *The Ten Commandments*, set to world premiere at Sundance.