# Face to Face with The Cleaner

Written by Michael Ross

On the south side of Stage 9, a parking lot has been transformed into a strip mall. Signs advertise a variety of fictional businesses: a coffee shop, a pizza joint, J&R Auto Restoration. Inside J&R's garage doors, however, lies not only an auto repair shop, but the headquarters of William Banks—addiction specialist and title character of the A&E series *The Cleaner*.

Across the parking lot, in an office inside Editorial 1, sits Warren Boyd, who bears a striking resemblance to the William Banks character as portrayed by Benjamin Bratt. This is no accident. Boyd is the real-life inspiration for the William character as well as the premise of *The Cleaner*, and the outward similarities are merely the beginning.

For eighteen years, Boyd has worked to combat addictions by any means necessary. He overcame his own addictions, which even led to time in prison, and now works tirelessly to assist others not only in getting clean, but in maintaining that sobriety and putting their lives back together. When asked how the show's depiction of William compares to his real-life work, Boyd finds one of the most accurate aspects to be how William must constantly think on his feet.

"He's a gunslinger, too," Boyd says. Both Warren and William have to make decisions as they go, reacting to the unpredictable and sometimes dangerous actions of those caught in the throes of addiction. To hear Boyd talk about his work is to listen to something out of an action movie: tales of facing armed Federales in the jungles of Mexico, of consulting with European royals and Hollywood celebrities. Except it is all his real life.

And that is where Boyd differs from William Banks, at least thus far. "William is about nine to eleven years behind where I am," he explains. "He doesn't yet have the technology or the access that I do." Boyd, who despite his past as a prisoner now holds a correctional badge, has worked closely with agencies such as the FBI and DEA, and he talks of technology straight out of science fiction. Having seen his own career develop in unexpected



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Warren Boyd co-executive producer and star Benjamin Bratt of The Cleaner

ways, he is confident that there are several seasons' worth of stories ahead for William.

One of the cornerstones of the series is William's team, Akani (played by Grace Park) and Swenton (Esteban Powell), who aid him in tracking addicts and maneuvering them into treatment. Boyd does work with a team of his own, too. He has an "immediate team of seven or eight people," but also notes that he brings in specialists on a case-by-case basis, depending on the needs of a particular situation or addict. He estimated that he has no fewer than 37 people on call to assist with cases if needed.

These include former clients. "Everybody becomes a resource," Boyd says of the people whom he helps overcome addiction. He likens his everexpanding roster to a school bus: every time he assists someone, he loads them onto that bus, and when a situation demands a particular skill or perspective, he has a ready arsenal of people from which to draw. He emphasizes that this not only benefits him and the person in need of help in a given situation, but the recovering addicts, as well.



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CSI:NY (CBS PRODUCTIONS/ CBS)

ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT (CBS TV DISTRIBUTION/ CBS)

THE INSIDER (CBS TV DISTRIBUTION/ CBS)

THE CLEANER (CBS/PARAMOUNT NETWORK TV/ A&E)

100 QUESTIONS FOR CHARLOTTE - PILOT (NBC UNIVERSAL/ NBC)

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2	Easter Sunday (Western)
8	Annex Film Group Short Film Screening on NY Street
22	Earth Day
25	Biola Media Conference at CBS Studio Center
27	Easter Sunday (Orthodox)



For which 1999 drama series did *The Cleaner* star Benjamin Bratt receive an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actor?

**FEBRUARY 2009** 

## Face to Face with The Cleaner

"It's a long-term process," he says, referring to his work with the clients and the necessity of keeping them involved with new cases. Participating in the cleaning and recovery of others is vital to his clients' continued sobriety and ongoing recovery, a process that will last their entire lives. Boyd, having been there, knows all too well how important these things are.

He does express a wish that the show, on which he serves as a Co-Executive Producer, would further explore these ongoing, long-term relationships. "What I do isn't just about the grab or the cleaning," Boyd says, in reference to Season 1's focus upon nabbing an addict and putting him or her into treatment. The direction for Season 2 makes him optimistic, as the show plans to focus less on the "grab" and more on William's part in not only detoxing an addict, but helping that person rebuild his or her life. A significant part of that, Boyd says, is cleaning up the messes that addicts make: not only in their own lives, but for their loved ones and associates. He talks of parents who have turned to theft and fraud out of desperation to help their addicted children. "On average, an addict messes up the lives of fifteen other people," he says.

That subtle but significant shift for the coming season makes Boyd hopeful about the future of the series, a project that was kicked around for years before finally coming to fruition. After he became acquainted with Jay Silverman (now a Co-Executive Producer on the show as well), Silverman introduced Warren to Jonathan Prince, who led them to CBS-Paramount Television and A&E. "I felt better at A&E than I did anywhere else," Boyd says of his comfort level in having the intimate and emotional nature of his work translated to an entertainment program.

He points to A&E's sincerity regarding the William Banks character and the mission of the series overall—to confront the reality of addiction and the difficulty of overcoming it—as the basis of his continued comfort with the show. "I feel just as good going into the second season as I did going into the first," he shares, "and that says a lot."



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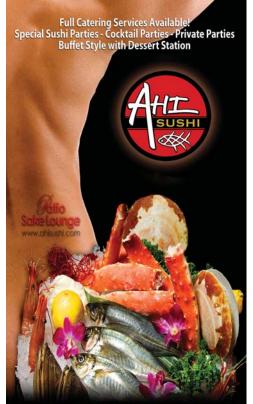
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