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By the way



For lack of place, this interview of Rene Balcer (creative of *New York Criminal Section*) could not have been published in its entirety in the magazine *EPIISODE* (N°5 - February 2003).

Here today in its complete version.

Large a thank you with Martin Winckler with whom I leave the place immediately:

*Rene Balcer, creator and executive producer of Law & Order: Criminal Intent formed part during ten years of the production line team of Law & Order.*

*It was nominated on several occasions for its scenarios (it wrote approximately 70 of them!), received Emmy of the best dramatic series as an executive producer of the series as well as ten of other rewards as a scenario writer; he usually makes the shuttle between his office with Universal City (Los Angeles) and the places of turning of his series in New York.*



ODAFIN TUTUOLA



**EPIISODE: From where was born the idea from Criminal Intent?**

Rene Balcer: I had always wanted to create a series which is partly told from the point of view of the criminal. I wanted to see what occurred between lui/elle and its accomplices, his lawyer, his family, her friends, and how it reacted to the investigation of the police force, how it reacted to the stress, which dynamics, which psychological releases were with work. The starting idea was that one. The other motivation was my love of the large detectives, Sherlock Holmes, Philip Marlowe, Maigret (which I read in French), or novels of Imanishi. I love the investigators intelligent, intuitive, who can read the human behavior. I also was interested in my friend Dr. Park Dietz, one of the experts the most brilliant psychiatrists of the United States, which was one of the first profilers FBI. These are the these influences which helped me to create the character of Robert Goren.

**¶: With the credits, one reads that you "developed" the series. Can you explain us this term?**

R. B: In this case, it is another manner of saying that I Co-created the series with Dick Wolf and that I am the principal craftsman in load. DW is credited as "creative" with the credits for contractual reasons independent of our respective contributions but it does not intervene or very little in the writing. I am an executive producer of *L&O: Ci*, I am also the "showrunner" - responsible for the majority of the artistic decisions - and the principal scenario writer: it is me which suggests all the stories, I write the synopses with each scenario writer, I rewrite each script like mine.

**¶: How many scenario writers do you have in the team? How do you write the scenarios? Who are your principal collaborators?**

R. B: I can say that 99% of the writing take place before the pre-production, which is rather unusual as regards televised series. But I am very organized, I know what I

want and I have of good scenario writers. For the first season, I collaborated with three scenario writers, all the women. I propose the history, I entrust it to the one scenario writers, one traces together the broad outline of script, then the scenario writer writes the first version, on which I put detailed annotations; she writes of it one second, which I rewrite, often in an important way. It takes time so that each scenario writer integrates the style of the series, the voice of the characters, the state of mind in which to approach each scene, manner of building the history. It took me four years to control that when I worked on *Law & Order*. Then, on *Criminal Intent*, I rewrite the majority of the dialogues and it is me which provided "tricks" that Goren uses to wedge the criminal. The voice of Goren is mine, at the bottom. When we started, Vincent D' Onofrio said to me that, when it wondered how to interpret the character, the rate/rhythm to use to say the dialogue, it decided to take to me for model. In fact, in the series, it is me whom it interprets! The person on which I rest more for each episode is my Co-executive producer, Fred Berner. It produced Pollock and Ballad of Little Joe, and of many other independent films. I always listen to his opinion on the scenarios. And it is a champion of the casting, he has very good taste...

**¶: Which are your preferred episodes of the first season? Those which you do hate more?**

R.B.: Except for an exception [ an episode entitled Insider], I like all the episodes of the first season. They have all something of private individual. We still seek to find good balance between Goren and the other characters so that the actors remain concerned, happy and stimulated. It is not easy. They have all much talent and one or two of them feels frustrated perhaps a little. For the second season, up to now I like much The Pilgrim, which speaks about a bomb planter, Anti-Thesis, where Goren meets somebody of its hardening [ a woman incarnée by Olivia d' Abo ], and Tomorrow, which transposes the business of the Papin sisters, two criminal employees of house that the French know well. But in the history, they are babiesitters. Everyone has a baby-sitter in New York.

**¶: Skoda [ excel it J.K. Simmons], the psychiatrist of *L&O*, appears in your series. One also sees there, briefly, Briscoe and Green. Do you intend to make some reappear others?**

R.B.: I do not have the obligation to do it. I created the character of Skoda and I like it much, but I will not reveal it that if it fulfills a function in the scenario.

**¶: Which is currently the audience of *L&O:CI*?**

R. B: This year, the audience increased by 30 %. It forms part of the twenty most looked at emissions every week and it is in the 18th place, currently. Last year, one was 26-28e. In our time box, in the age bracket 18-49, we beat *Alias* and *the Sopranos* !

**¶: Which series do you look at, with television?**

R. B: I do not look at much of it, mainly because I do not have time. I look at information, the historical chains, the documentary ones, and I sample certain series. I did not find any who satisfy me or they ask me too much time. I look at sitcoms rather (*Frasier*, *Friends*, *Scrubs*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*). The maid are funny... and they do not last a long time! In the past, I looked at *the Incorruptible ones*, *Twilight Zone*, *Star Trek*, the first two seasons of *Homicide* and *NYPD Blue*, *St Elsewhere* and some

episodes of *L.A. Law* and *The Rockford Files* (*Two hundred dollars plus the expenses*).

**¶: You have other projects, currently?**

R.B.: Yes, I develop for ABC a new series which will speak about the police force of New York in 1895. It was at the time the most brutal police force and more corrompue of the country...

To also see: [Interview of Rene Balcer in Generation Series \(1998\)](#)

**Remarks collected by Martin Winckler.**



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