

Don Cheadle: Ready to Build House of Lies [Video]

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Big buzz and Don Cheadle make for perfect bedfellows this week. For starters, the popular star of *Hotel Rwanda* and the *Iron Man* films, among others, took to the long-form Twitter service, TwitLonger -- yes, it exists -- to defend the use of the word "gangster," which he used to describe the way he wanted President Obama to conduct himself in office.

"Coming out of eight years of a president who I believe in many ways took us as dangerously close to the brink of destruction as any before him, I was hoping for a seismic shift in the other direction," Cheadle noted. "I don't think we've had that."

The original comment reportedly created a stir but I doubt that it was as upsetting as some media outlets made it out to be. Still, Cheadle's willingness to bring more clarity to the matter shows off one thing: the man is a mensch

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Beyond that, the man is capturing the spotlight this week for another reason -- the much-anticipated premiere of [House of Lies](#), his new Showtime series. It rises to the occasion at 10 p.m. Sunday, curiously sandwiched between [Shameless](#)

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and

[Californication](#)

, two shows whose moral compasses spin with reckless abandon.

Lies chronicles the oft unscrupulous, "take-what-you-can" methods of management consulting within mammoth corporations. It's a dark, edgy, comedy but Marty, the character Cheadle portrays, is absolutely nothing like the actor. At all.

"A lot of things made me say yes to the role," Cheadle opened up in our recent interview. "I always start with the script when choosing a role, and I really thought this was a good project. It's something that I haven't necessarily played before."

True. Cheadle's brand new alter ego is an emotionally beaten down top-level consultant who stops at nothing to seal a big deal. His only humanity comes from having to raise his young son solo. Kristen Bell (*Veronica Mars*) and Ben Schwartz (*Undercovers*) round out the impressive cast.

Kudos to Cheadle, though. In *House of Lies*, he dives into a creative arena that A) is downright timely if not blatantly intentional in the way it gets its reverse-message across -- glamorize the greedy so you realize that it's not cool to be greedy -- and B) is just so foreign to the way he's always operated in the world.

"Growing up, I was always pretty opinionated about right and wrong," he admits. "But when I became older, I was much more aware of the world and what was around me. It became really important for me to participate as opposed to only 'look' at the news, but to be in a position to put ideas into play. That was 'natural' for me."