



## **Vincent D'Onofrio Takes a Bite Out of Shepard's Crime**

By  
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Some people learn French or Italian or Hebrew or English to play a part. Vincent D'Onofrio had to learn Shepard. Some people learn French or Italian or Hebrew or English to play a part. Vincent D'Onofrio had to learn Shepard.

The Shepard, anyway, of *Tooth of Crime (Second Dance)*. It's a language that goes, for instance, like this. Hoss speaks:

"Management? This Zoombah can't even figure out the wiring anymore. Lookit him! Pathetic. Crawling through radio voltage from some lost World War his Daddy can't remember. Git his ass gone! I need me a Forward Man. Git me a Dee Jay or something. One a the Stand Bys."

And that's the easy part.

Hoss is the main man of *Tooth of Crime (Second Dance)*. He's sort of a cowboy, sort of a gangster, sort of a Martian, sort of a bushwhacker, sort of a rock star.

Is he in addition to some degree a self-portrait of Sam Shepard, who wrote *Tooth of Crime* a quarter-century ago and rewrote it as this (*Second Dance*) more recently?

"I wouldn't say that," said Vince D'Onofrio, who may be thought to have the inside track. He's the Hoss of the revival at the Lortel of Shepard's 1972 Obie winner, "with Sam being a big help" at rehearsals.

T Bone Burnett has supplied new music and lyrics, one fragment of which sets the scene: "Somebody's got to monitor all this darkness darkness darkness/Somebody's got to locate the bomb dot com . . ."

Welcome to virtual drama.

D'Onofrio never saw the original *Tooth* he was a teenager back in Bensonhurst but he read it and did some scenes from it in acting classes in the eighties.

"I've always looked on the play," he says, "as a kind of post-Apocalyptic *High Noon*. A duel of rock stars. I wouldn't leave out terrorists. They're definitely terrorists" Hoss and Becky and Ruido Ran and Chaser and Doc and Meera. Well, Meera's dead. "Get that dog meat outa here!" Hoss had yelled, but he hadn't

quite expected them to cut off Meera's head.

"These guys," D'Onofrio said between shows, "go in like rock-'n'-rollers and take a town and do it with art and finesse." Meera's severed head would probably appreciate that.

For a somewhat more accessible share of art and finesse there's *The Whole Wide World*, a film starring and produced by D'Onofrio that opened nationally around the time *Tooth* opened in New York. In it, D'Onofrio parlayed against the lovely new actress Rebee Zellweger brings sensitivity the crudeness of super-prolific 1930's pulp-fiction writer Robert E. Howard.

D'Onofrio himself is Brooklyn-bred, the son of an interior designer who did community theater on the side and fostered his son's interest in acting. In Robert Altman's *The Player*, D'Onofrio is the screenwriter murdered by Tim Robbins, who then appropriates his victim's stunning widow. Don't get mad, get even. D'Onofrio and that lady, Greta Scacchi, spent the next five years together. Four-year-old Leila is the proof. "The only woman now in my life," says Hoss.

-- By Jerry Tallmer

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