

## Essays

### VINCENT D'ONOFRIO...the invisible actor

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Ruby Anselmo - 4th October 2003

He is not picture perfect or sweet on the eye, but the moment Vincent D'Onofrio appears on the screen I am instantly mesmerised and lured and swooned...so all there is in the world is a character and the man behind him. It is pure genius to be able to captivate an audience and keep them in that surreal otherworldly state for hours after seeing a movie. And I am not alone in my admiration of D'Onofrio: many actors who have worked with him such as Mathew Modine (in *Full Metal Jacket*) and Ethan Hawke (in *The Newton Boys*) have openly praised his 'old school' acting techniques. He is not a celebrity he is an actor, and one of the finest character actors of his generation. He is quite simply the actor's actor!



D'Onofrio's role as Leonard Lawrence (or 'Private Gomer Pyle') in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* manipulatively revealed his brilliance (and sucked me in to the web of D'Onofrio worship). The character is introduced as an adorably chubby and innocent man-child with a cute meek voice, simple nature and shy smile: a paradox in a bloodthirsty army camp where it is the strong who survive. He is constantly humiliated and beaten down, until he eventually cracks. He has intimate conversations with his rifle 'Charlene', and he finally finds his expertise: shooting. His face drops, his eyes narrow into a dark and disturbing gaze, his mouth forms into a sinister grin, and his voice deepens, uttering the words slowly and menacingly: "I am...in a world...of shit", before he blows his brains out. Definitely one of the most memorable lines in film history.

It is not only D'Onofrio's realistic portrayal of his characters that makes him so charming; but it is his manner, his thoughtfulness, the break in his words to draw the viewer in, his odd movements and the charismatic gaze that also keeps you intrigued. Even his role as a serial killer in *The Cell* oozed with ridiculous attractiveness. I would like to add that D'Onofrio's charm extended to 'hotness' in his role as Gordon in the very dull movie *Dying Young*. His gorgeousness made it tolerable to sit through two hours of Julia Roberts.

Unfortunately, Vincent D'Onofrio's brilliance is too often overlooked in Hollywood. Roles that should be played by a 'real' actor are almost always given to those more 'popular' or 'pretty' celebrities who dull and devalue the character and movie. They are offered these roles because they are known, while it is Vincent D'Onofrio's characters who are remembered. The man behind them remains invisible.

You can see Vincent D'Onofrio every Thursday night on Channel 10 in *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*.



Vincent D'Onofrio movies:

The First Turn-On  
Full Metal Jacket

Mystic Pizza  
The Player  
Dying Young  
Ed Wood  
JFK  
Malcolm X  
The Whole Wide World  
The Newton Boys  
Good Luck  
Feeling Minnesota  
Steal This Movie  
Impostor  
Happy Accidents  
The Salton Sea  
The Cell  
The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys

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