

D'Onofrio's load lightened

By Scott D. Pierce

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BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — Pity poor Vincent D'Onofrio. His job pays him tons of money and takes up lots of his time.

But there's relief coming. The "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" star will appear in only half of this season's 22 episodes. He'll split time with Chris Noth, who will play Detective Mike Logan — the character he played on "Law & Order" from 1990-95 — in the other 11 episodes.

"It means for the first time since the first season, I will actually be able to sit with the script in my lap for 10 days before we shoot it," D'Onofrio said. "As an actor — especially a film actor — that's an incredible thing for me."



Chris Haston, Nbc Universal

Annie Parisse, Mariska Hargitay, Vincent D'Onofrio

We're happy for you. We really are.

"Secondly, I'll have a life. Other than sitting here and talking to you, I'll be able to do things other than acting. It's great," D'Onofrio said.

So, what will he be doing other than acting? Well, acting, for the most part.

"I've been a character actor more than half of my life and now I'll be able to go back to character acting again. It's all-around better," he said.

D'Onofrio recently shot a movie called "The Breakup" with Vince Vaughn and Jennifer Aniston. He's got a development deal for two movies. And he's got a film called "Five Minutes, Mr. Wells" that he produced, directed and starred in.

Lucky thing he has time now for things other than acting. But he won't use the extra time to dig deeper into the quirky "Criminal Intent" character.

"They'll fire me if I do any further and deeper stuff," D'Onofrio said.

THE ONLY THING odder than listening to D'Onofrio complain about the horrendous burden of having a job is that he was sitting next to Mariska Hargitay, star of "Law & Order: SVU," while he was doing it.

Much to her credit, she was diplomatic.

"I'm not going to lie. I'm very jealous," Hargitay said. "There is a lack of life that accompanies being on this kind of show — his show and my show. . . . I

don't think he was ever not in a scene.

"I miss having a life, but I managed to squeeze one in."

THE NEWEST ADDITION to "the mothership" — the original "Law & Order" — is still so giddy about landing the role that she hasn't started to complain about the work load yet.

"It's been fantastic," Annie Parisse said. "It's a show with such an incredible tradition. And not only that, but there truly (is) a group of actors working on this show who I am so honored to be working with and from whom I'm learning so much every day.

"Not to mention . . . the (guest) actors that come on in New York, and that has been so fantastic for me. I've never done a show yet where I haven't known somebody or had a two-degrees-of-separation connection with the guest stars who come on. My (college) acting teacher actually did an episode of the show."

That teacher, Deborah Hedwall, played a cult member accused of abusing children.

"She was, in fact, abusing the children and we did get to send her away," Parisse said. "So I was, like, 'Ha! That's for all the trouble you caused me.' "

Parisse has been surprised when she's recognized — like the guy who approached her at the coffee shop she goes to every day.

"This guy was standing in front of me and he suddenly said, 'Hi,' " she said. "And I thought, 'Oh, do I know that guy?'

"And then he was, like, 'I'm sorry. I just wanted to tell you that I think that you're doing such a great job on the show. My mom and my sister and I have been huge fans for a really long time and we really like what you're doing.' So I thought that was nice, because he said he had been watching it for 15 years with his mom and his sisters. It meant a lot to me that somebody who was an original fan of the show liked what I was doing."