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'Law & Order' stirs crowd, complaints along Bell Blvd.

By Ayala Ben-Yehuda

06/12/2003

After a grisly "murder" last week at the American Vision optical shop on Bell Boulevard in Bayside, the accomplices plotted their next move at the nearby Gold Star Diner. Then a gaggle of "reporters" camped outside the Douglas Manor home of a suspect in the crime.

None of that

actually happened, but the filming of "Law & Order: Criminal Intent," the NBC detective series, did take place Thursday and Friday at locations along Bell Boulevard, at a home in Douglas Manor and at Queensborough Community College.

Gawkers turned out to watch the bustle of television personnel communicating via walkie-talkies, setting up directors' chairs at key locations and hauling equipment from trailers.

The show's star, Vincent D'Onofrio, even signed autographs and posed for pictures with fans outside American Vision last Thursday.

"It's exciting," said Bayside resident Fran Sisselman, who stood and watched the hubbub outside Gold Star Diner on Friday.

A location employee speaking on condition of anonymity said the Bell businesses were chosen for their close proximity to each other and to the home at 248 Manor Road, where a "media circus" was filmed last Thursday.

The home's owner could not be reached for comment, but neighbor Wayne Chiang took the activity in stride, saying it was not uncommon for filmmakers to use Manor Road.

"It's no big deal," he said.



Production staffers get ready to film a scene of "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" at the American Vision optical shop in Bayside.

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Parking was prohibited on Bell Boulevard from 41st to 43rd avenues and along certain side streets during filming. Manor and Center roads in Douglas Manor also had parking restrictions.

"I think it's fun for the area. It livens things up," said Mary Ann Camenzuli as she watched outside McDonald's with William Dempsey, 88, also of Bayside.

"Can we get a job as extras?" she asked him.

"It depends on who you know," said Dempsey, a working actor who has appeared in numerous films.

Not everyone was excited. Steve Lastihenos, owner of Apollo Comfort Shoes, said the filming made an already difficult parking situation even worse for customers.

"They're killing about 60 parking spots today," he said Friday.

"I had numerous customers saying, 'I was supposed to come by and pick something up ... (and) I couldn't get parking,'" he said.

Lastihenos said the hope of publicity for the participating businesses was probably a false one.

"Unless they get some really good compensation for the day, I don't see how it's going to help their business so much," he said.

Across the street, the owner of Paradise Furniture said at least one customer had driven around the block four times and gone home in frustration.

"We had no say in this whatsoever," said the owner, Bruce, who declined to give his last name.

"A permit to take up a whole two blocks of spots? I just can't believe that something like that can be done," he said.

Another location used for filming was the North Fork Bank on Northern and Bell boulevards. The Douglaston Club and All Saints' Episcopal Church were used as break rooms.

Lastihenos, of Apollo Comfort Shoes, said a street fair would probably not pass muster with civic leaders, but it would do more to promote Bayside businesses than a film shoot could.

"That's a good way of congesting the neighborhood," he said. "That puts Bayside on the map."

Chris Axiadis, owner of the Gold Star Diner, said the filming at his restaurant would do exactly that.

"Overall, it's nice for the neighborhood," said Axiadis, who got to watch the shoot from inside. "Every little corner of America is going to see Bayside."

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