



December 6, 2007

# Law & Order: CI's Vincent D'Onofrio Finally Goes Off the Deep End

By NINA HÄMMERLING SMITH  
TV GUIDE

There's never been a TV cop quite like Detective Bobby Goren on *Law and Order: Criminal Intent* (Thursdays at 10 pm/ET, USA). His investigative techniques and powers of observation are unparalleled, and his insights verge on the manic genius (with emphasis on the "manic"). Throughout the series' six-year run, the question has come up time and again whether or not Vincent D'Onofrio's character actually is bonkers. In tonight's "Untethered," one of Goren's most harrowing storylines to date, he gets himself admitted into a mental ward to investigate his nephew's allegations of torture and murder in an isolation room known as "Heaven"... and proves just how insane he can really be. TVGuide.com talked to D'Onofrio about the show's new network, what it was like shooting at New York's Rikers Island prison and how he plays it crazy.

---

**TVGuide.com: First off, *Criminal Intent* is doing really well on USA — how do you feel about the move?**

**Vincent D'Onofrio:** Two things are happening to help the show now: Warren Lieght, our showrunner, and his team of writers are putting out some of the best scripts we've ever had. And the other thing is USA: They're treating us as if we're a new show; they're behind us in everything that we want to do. And our fan base is still getting used to us being on USA, but most of them have come over and are still watching, and I think more are joining.

**TVGuide.com: "Untethered" is an incredible tour-de-force performance from you. What was it like to shoot?**

**D'Onofrio:** Kate [costar Kathryn Erbe] and I both are enjoying some of this personal stuff going on. The first episode this season dealt with Kate's [character, Eames'] history. It's more like film work than TV work. I love it. Anytime you get to deal with more emotions and backstory, you're just prone as an actor to do more specific work than just telling a crime story.

**TVGuide.com: What was it like doing much of the episode at Rikers?**

**D'Onofrio:** It's a very depressing place. It's not a place you want to spend a lot of time. The guards are very efficient — you feel very protected. You don't feel like you're in any kind of danger. They're all huge fans of the show, to tell you the truth. [Laughs] You sign a lot of autographs, you take a lot of pictures, and everybody takes care of you and makes sure you're not nervous about being in a place where criminals are incarcerated.

**TVGuide.com: Was it inspiring to be in that environment, shooting on location?**

**D'Onofrio:** It's always nice. I guess that's what I mean about the film work — usually when you do a film, you're in the real place you're shooting, or something like it, rather than on sets being built. It always helps.

**TVGuide.com: What all is involved in shooting at a real, working jail?**

**D'Onofrio:** We've shot there a couple of times before and they've always been really helpful. I think

they're kind of used to us. But they always have to read the scripts, approve what we're doing. To get our crew in and out of there is a whole complicated thing. It takes hours and hours before any of the shooting actually starts, because each truck has to be brought in, each truck has to be searched; everybody has to be accounted for and turn their license in to get a pass. It's a very long process, so it's not like we want to shoot in there every episode.

**TVGuide.com: Did you have any interaction with the prisoners?**

**D'Onofrio:** No, that's not allowed; you don't get to do that. I mean, there are prisoners being escorted through set all day long. The whole vibe is not a real happy vibe, you know, because it's prison. [*Laughs*] So there are no big smiles or anything. Everybody is just very careful and polite. But, you know, the prisoners do not look happy, and I can understand why.

**TVGuide.com: Were any of your prison scenes shot at the studio?**

**D'Onofrio:** The stuff where I'm tied down to the slab, in this place called "Heaven," that was on set, which I was happy about. It was just better that way, because I had to go inside [myself] as an actor, so it was nice that we were at the studio doing that. But any of the stuff where you see me around the prison and in the cells we did at Rikers.

**TVGuide.com: Does playing such dark material affect you?**

**D'Onofrio:** For "Untethered," I asked them to [schedule] the last three days to make them the most intense days, the scenes in "Heaven." I wanted to do those three days last so I could go as deep as I wanted to or felt I needed to. It worked out. No, it's not the greatest way to spend the day, but it's not digging ditches, either.