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D'Onofrio Goes Inside for 'Criminal Intent'

Vincent D'Onofrio didn't create the character of Robert Goren, the intense detective at the center of NBC's new "**Law and Order**" show, subtitled "**Criminal Intent**."

But the actor is having a lot of fun inhabiting him.

"These guys haven't said 'no' to me yet," D'Onofrio tells Zap2it of his bosses, "**L&O**" creator Dick Wolf and writer Rene Balcer. "They actually let me play a character, do what I like to do."

D'Onofrio describes Goren as "the first internal character that these guys have ever written for their shows. My character is actually allowed to stop and figure things out."

Goren's back story is that he served in special investigative unit in the Army and studied forensic psychology before becoming a cop. D'Onofrio says that profile allows him to do a number of things with the character, and making anyone from "**CSI**" rather superfluous. It also explains the pilot, where Goren appears to be a crime-solving team of one.

"He approaches things in a blue-collar way, yet he's an academic type. It allows me to go many different places."

D'Onofrio, who's making his first foray into TV as a series regular (although his guest appearance on NBC's old series "**Homicide: Life On the Street**" as a man who cut in half by a subway train, taking the entire episode to die, is widely regarded as a classic), was also drawn to Wolf's and Balcer's *modus operandi* of revealing character traits through the plot.

"The last thing I wanted to do was something that was too soapy," he says. "I thought that the way to go was just straight-out storytelling. You learn about how the character is through the circumstance of the story."

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