Portrait: Vincent D'Onofrio

THE COP WITH A BRIEFCASE

He's the most fascinating cop on world television today. And has been since Dick Wolf launched *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* in 2001.

This guy doesn't seem to know all the answers - hasn't read the script! - before arriving on the crime scene like Columbo. He's not all blustery, flabby muscle, but the sweetest of sweethearts like Sipowicz. He's not a saint like Bobby Simone, nor a despot like Vic Macky.

In fact, he's often a better shrink than B.D. Wong on *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit.*

Armed more usually with his briefcase than a gun, Robert Goren works the case by simply getting on with it. He's not unlike a bulldog... he has been known to literally sniff his suspects.

And he's left-handed.

Apart from the omnipresent briefcase, he has incredible body language... bending from the waist, all the better to be able to look up at suspects, almost up their noses (he's taller than anyone) and then spring back up again.

"This show is different from the other *Law & Orders*," says Vincent D'Onofrio. "It's based more on psychology – the intent of the criminal. "Wolf came to me. No auditions. I was allowed to create the character. Goren is well-educated, single and he does quirky things at all the wrong times. I plan some of it but sometimes my character mystifies even me."

The result is a riveting performance, entering its fourth year now, that finally stops people – journalists and fans alike - only ever referring to Vincent D'Onofrio as Pvt. Pyle in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket.*

Hey people, that was 27 years ago...

Oh, there have been many other perfect and bravura performances since then. In *Mystic Pizza, Dying Young, The Player, Salton Sea...* As Abbie Hoffman in *Steal This Movie* (a D'Onofrio production), Moriarty opposite James D'Arcy's Sherlock Holmes in *Case of Evil*, Bill Newman in both *JFK* and *Malcolm X* and Orson Welles in *Ed Wood,*

However, the definitive D'Onofrio has to be Goren - his longest lasting, absolutely on the pulse, same-time-same-channel-every-week, yet never repetitive performance. You just know this is something special, rather than cosy, because he hasn't won an Emmy for it!

"Some scenes you juggle two balls," he says by way of explaining the unexplainable, "some scenes you juggle three balls, some scenes you can juggle five balls. The key is always to speak in your own voice. Speak the truth. That's Acting 101. Then you start putting layers on top of that."

"He calls himself a Hollywood hired gun,"says his dad, Gene D'Onofrio. "If a producer has a character they can't get a handle on, they call Vincent. The only thing he tells them is: Don't mess with me when I'm doing it. He does it his way."

Doesn't he, though!

Tony Crawley

ENTERING THE HALL ZONE...

He was frequently The Young Somebody. Young Steve Allen,. Young Edgar Allen Poe. Not to mention the young Huckleberry Finn. And at 17, the youngest star of *Saturday Night Live.*

After *Sixteen Candles, The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science,* the young (what else!) Brat Backer turned down playing John Hughes yet again in *Pretty in Pink* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off.* Then, he quit or was fired (legends will differ!) from Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* in 1987. That caused a lull but he was soon back in a succession of fine tele-movies including playing Bill Gates in *Pirates of Silicon Valley.*

And now Anthony Michael Hall, one of the first of the stars with three names, is really back on top – making a better job than Christopher Walken ever did of playing Stephen King's hero plagued with the gift of second sight - Johnny Smith in the TV series version of Stephen King's *The Dead Zone.*

Poor Johnny. He has woken from a coma with his powers. He was out for six years, during which time his lover (the delightful Nicole DeBoer, from *Deep Space Nine*) married the local sheriff – and they are raising her and Johnny's son.

"There are elements that remind me of Nostradamus... My task every week to make things believable. that might seem unreal or unbelievable. What else can I ask for as an actor?"

It's Hall's first series. "It's not a science fiction show, nor, specifically, a Stephen King show. Some of the episodes are serialized, some stand alone, some are inspired by movies – *Twelve Angry Men*, etc. We make the show we want to make and we're proud of it."

We being his producers, Michael Pilger *(Star Trek)* and son, Shawn, Hall's partner. Plus a third producer called Anthony Michael Hall!

He also directs some episodes – eight years after making his helming debut with *Hail Caesar.* Not about the young Julius Caesar but Julius Caesar McMurty.

Of course it was !

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