



LAW & ORDER: CRIMINAL INTENT.(Review)

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LAW & ORDER: CRIMINAL INTENT

(SERIES; NBC, SUN. SEPT. 30, 9 P.M.)

Filmed in New York by Wolf Films and Studios USA Television. Executive producers, Dick Wolf, Rene Balcer; co-executive producers, Peter Jankowski, Fred Berner, Geoffrey Neigher, Arthur Forney; producers, John L. Roman, Roz Weinman, Eric Overmeyer; co-producer, Michael Kewley; director, Jean De Segonzac; writer, Rene Balcer; camera, Frank Prinzi; music, Mike Post; casting, Lynn Kressel. 60 MIN.

Robert Goren	Vincent D'Onofrio
Alexandra Eames	Kathryn Erbe
James Deakin	Jamey Sheridan
Ron Carver	Courtney B. Vance

Dick Wolf has added a compelling dimension to his flagship series "Law & Order" by exploring the inner workings of the criminal justice system from the legal and investigative standpoints in "Law & Order: Criminal Intent." As the name would indicate, viewers also delve into the psychology of the criminal mind.

On the surface, the concept of "Criminal Intent" seems like a gimmicky way to milk some of the success from its predecessors, but in the capable hands of exec producers Wolf and Rene Balcer, who also serve as the show's head writers, it makes for taut, engaging television. This self-perpetuating franchise of cops and lawyers is hardly running out of steam.

"Criminal Intent" should have the clear edge on Sunday nights, with a severely anemic "The X-Files" and ABC's "Alias" as the only possible diversions. Although all of the "L&O" skeins are essentially ensemble-driven, "Criminal In tent" so far is a one-man show with Vincent D'Onofrio at its center.

D'Onofrio, an intriguing and dynamic character actor lured from the bigscreen, stars as extremely

right-brained Detective Robert Goren, who has powers of deduction to rival those of Sherlock Holmes. He and his partner, Detective Alexandra Eames (Kathryn Erbe), handle the cases the regular police can't solve. Needless to say, there is a certain animosity between this elite group and the regular PD.

Pilot starts with a particularly narcissistic burglar (played by Jake Weber) pulling off a diamond heist with a heavy casualty list but few dues. Undeterred, Eames and especially Goren use their honed skills to read between the lines and find the subtle clues to psychologically identify the bad guy.

By scrutinizing motive and intent, "Criminal Intent" utilizes a more personal style that sets it apart from its brethren. Wolf's characters are notoriously devoid of detailed personal lives, but debut seg hints at a little more introspection on the part of the characters.

Rather than split the show evenly between the law and the order, "Criminal" explores in tandem the work of the police and the criminal, with director Jean de Segonzac handling the action like a well-choreographed dance.

D'Onofrio commands the most attention, tending to overshadow Erbe, who is reduced in the pilot to following Goren with an awestruck look. If Wolf's track record is any indication, and it usually is, we'll see her character and those of Courtney B. Vance as assistant D.A. Ron Carver and Jamey Sheridan as the politically ambitious Capt. Deakin evolve with each passing week.

Polished technical credits reinforce the integrity of the "Law & Order" reputation.

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