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## 'Law & Order': For New York actors, powerhouse TV franchise keeps on giving

By FRAZIER MOORE  
AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) -- If you're a fan, you see "Law & Order" as a complex crime drama whose weekly path to justice takes lots of twists -- with lots of people to investigate along the way.

If you're the casting director, you see it as an appetite that's never satisfied; more than three dozen speaking roles must be cast per episode, some 700 in a season.

And if you're a New York-based actor, you see this enduring NBC drama (and its newer siblings "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit" and "Law & Order: Criminal Intent") as a valued local job bank always full of great parts.

That goes whether you're a struggling beginner or a familiar Broadway presence such as Patti LuPone, Philip Bosco, George Hearn or Frances Sternhagen. (In its first dozen years, more than 150 Tony Award nominees appeared on "Law & Order.")

There's only one problem.

"They are extremely particular about getting exactly the right person for each role," reports Patrick Quinn. "After I had auditioned a few times and hadn't gotten a part, I started worrying that I would be the only New York actor who DIDN'T make it on 'Law & Order.'"

Then he did -- twice (so far). He played the father of a boy whose Web site may have led to a murder, and before that, on "Special Victims Unit," the lawyer of a woman murdered at a bachelorette party.

Quinn is primarily a stage actor whose Broadway appearances include the 1990s revival of the musical "Damn Yankees."

He is also the president of Actors' Equity Association, the stage actors' union, with 15,000 members in the New York area alone.

"Not all of us can work on Broadway at any one time," says Quinn, "so the 'Law & Order' trilogy can be a great way to supplement your income as well as your artistry.



■ Patrick Quinn, an actor and current president of Actors Equity Association, poses on a roof overlooking Times Square in New York Aug. 22. Quinn, primarily a stage actor whose credits include nine Broadway shows, also is among actors who have performed occasionally in the "Law & Order" series of dramas on NBC. ■

Local Weather

Temperature: 57<sup>i</sup> F  
 Sky Conditions: Overcast  
 Wind: From the SSE at 8 MPH  
 Relative Humidity: 76%  
 Visibility: 7 miles  
 Pressure: 29.89in. Hg  
 Dew Point: 50<sup>i</sup> F

Last updated: Wed, 23-Apr-2003 9:01

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"Friends and family can't always get to New York to see your work," he adds. "But they can always see (E)Law & Order."

With most TV series filmed in Los Angeles (and others, increasingly, heading to Canada), New York and New Jersey currently host the "Law & Order" trilogy, "Ed" and "Third Watch," along with HBO's "Sex and the City" and "The Sopranos."

Back in fall 1990, when "Law & Order" started up, "The Cosby Show" -- closeted in a Queens sound stage -- was the only other network prime-time series produced in New York.

"Law & Order" showcased the city with dozens of on-location scenes in each episode. And casting director Suzanne Ryan has served the equivalent duty of showcasing the human face of New York, filling every speaking role in each of the 280-and-counting "Law & Order" scripts.

From the moment she is handed a script, Ryan has just eight days to identify and deliver the right actors. On the ninth day, filming begins -- and she gets the next script. Meanwhile, her counterparts at "Special Victims Unit" (Julie Tucker) and "Criminal Intent" (Gayle Keller) are engaged in a similar pursuit.

While Los Angeles-based actors are occasionally cast as guest stars, cost and logistical considerations discourage it.

"Besides, there are so many talented people here," says Ryan, who is up for an Emmy this year for Outstanding Casting in a Drama Series. "It's wonderful that we're able to provide them an opportunity for work."

The series itself received a record-tying 11th best-series nomination. (Emmys are to be awarded in September.)

The "Law & Order" trilogy has provided meaty roles for husband-and-wife actors Jay O. Sanders and Maryann Plunkett.

Plunkett, a Tony-winning stage actress, had her third guest shot on "Law & Order" in February, in an episode based loosely on the Gary Condit story. Plunkett played the scorned wife of a state senator whose intern turns up dead.

The "Law & Order" set is "very New York and familiar, with people I know," says Plunkett. "I tend to be shy, but I always feel comfortable walking into that environment."

Sanders, who has appeared in "JFK," "Along Came a Spider" and the recent ABC miniseries "Widows," enjoyed a fringe benefit when he appeared on a "Law & Order" episode three years ago: proximity. He traveled less than a mile from his Greenwich Village apartment to the series' Chelsea headquarters.

For one key location scene in the episode -- in which he played a maniacal family man suspected of pushing someone in front of a subway train -- Sanders reported to a subway station just a few blocks from home.

Sanders will appear on "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" this fall as "a nice-guy hit man," he says.

In his free time, he, like many other New Yorkers in his line of work, enjoys watching

**Do you favor the Supreme Court ruling that upheld the Tecumseh School Board policy of drug testing students who are involved in extracurricular activities?**

yes, I favor the decision

no, I do NOT favor the decision

the trio of home-town dramas -- for a personal reason.

"It's a favorite sport to watch any episode from any year," he explains. "You spot your friends."

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