

- ▶ national
- ▶ world
- ▶ breaking news
- ▶ features
- ▶ opinion
- ▶ business
- ▶ technology
- ▶ sport
- ▶ realfooty
- ▼ entertainment
  - arts
  - books
  - epicure
  - fashion
  - film
  - music
  - people
  - tv & radio
  - ▶ multimedia

#### classifieds

- mycareer
- domain
- drive
- place an ad

- extra
- crosswords
- personal finance
- travel
- education

- subscribe
- home delivery
- eNewsletter

- archives

- today's edition: [am](#)
- [last 10 days](#)

- [site guide](#)



## ENTERTAINMENT / TV & RADIO

[arts](#) [books](#) [epicure](#) [fashion](#) [film](#) [music](#) [people](#) [tv & radio](#)

[Home](#) > [Entertainment](#) > [TV & Radio](#) > [Article](#)

# Copping it sweet

By Brian Courtis  
May 20, 2004

-  [Print this article](#)
-  [Email to a friend](#)

The evidence, she admits, was always there. Detective Bobby Goren would get those angst-packed moments in the interrogation room, where, facing the two-way mirror and, standing spread-eagled, hands taut against its frame and creasing forehead pressed against the glass, he would come up with the goods. Detective Alexandra Eames would be there only to support him, reflecting in the glow of that investigative genius.



Kathryn Erbe.

Well, maybe it's not been quite as simple as that. Kathryn Erbe, the talented TV, movie and stage actor who plays Eames in Dick Wolf's award-winning series *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, has certainly become Dr Watson to Vincent D'Onofrio's sideways-glancing, thumbnail-chewing Sherlock Holmes, but one suspects she has brought a lot more hard wit and wisdom to the role than writer-producer Rene Balcer ever expected.

So does she feel she is getting a fair go?


"Sometimes!" she tells me, amused by the thought. "Sometimes I get bored. On our websites we have something called 'fanfiction' where viewers write their own episodes like a short story. And there was one I thought very funny and accurate where I had to actually defend my right to even have a job, because I don't do anything."

Even when she does have some exposition, the tall, fidgety D'Onofrio can be a scene-stealer. Still, she says, she would never for a second ask him to ease up.

"No ... well, now and then I have to ask him to step out of the way so the camera can see me, but not that often. And it's all very good-natured."


Although she would never ask the writers to give Alex Eames more of a say, Erbe says she does have input into what happens to her character.

### FILM

- [When the oil sticks](#) 
- [Mac attack](#)
- [Uma kills off sexiness](#)


 [More Film](#)

### MUSIC

- [Ukraine wins Eurovision](#) 
- [Lavigne ditches carbs](#)
- [Spreading the message](#)

 [More Music](#)

### TV & RADIO

- [Locals hurting](#) 
- [TV window into Melbourne's secret world](#)
- [Reality reaches new low](#)

 [More TV & Radio](#)

### ARTS

"There are parameters that I didn't understand in the beginning," Erbe says. "I thought I was signing on for something that was more of an equal partnership. But to tell you the truth, now that I have the job and have two kids I don't really want to have to spend any more time working on my lines."

*Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, with audiences now ranging from 10 to 14 million an episode in the US, is currently one of the biggest hits among the *CSIs*, *JAGs* and *Law & Orders*, those popular, expanding, reality-stomping shows American critics have somewhat cruelly tagged "McDramas".

Back on Channel Ten here for its third season, it has been used by programmer David Mott to launch the network's somewhat risky pull away from the Sunday-night hit-movies format. So far, so good.

The *Criminal Intent* series concentrates more on investigations than legal resolution compared to others in the franchise. It focuses on the minds of criminals while drawing on the psychological tactics used by New York's Major Case Squad to solve their crimes.

This year, one of the more intriguing mysteries has been the way in which the cameras try to keep signs of Erbe's pregnancy under cover. The actor, married to *Oz* star Terry Kinney, whom she first met while playing a death-row inmate on the HBO series, is cleverly angled, though for six episodes, when placed on desk duty-maternity leave but still on screen, the active part of her role is taken over by Samantha Buck as ambitious detective G. Lynn Bishop.

Erbe already has an eight-year-old daughter, Maeve. In October she gave birth to a son, Carson Lincoln Kinney. "Those four episodes I worked on before the audience knew I was pregnant were the hardest because I did feel ill and my energy level was really low," she says. "But the last four I did before my son was born were really easy . . . I only did one scene an episode, so that was heaven."

And the stand-in? Bishop may give Bobby Goren a run for his money, but for many fans it did affect the balance of the show.

"She has gone now and she did a valiant job," Erbe says. "But it was difficult, I think, for people to handle the change. She was up against a lot of adversity."

Still, Erbe is happy the producers are showing enough confidence in *Law & Order: Criminal Content* to start "playing" with the construction of the series.


"I was actually getting bored working on them because they were so formulaic," she says. "Obviously, they still do follow a certain formula, but we are mixing it up in terms of the way we expose and trap those people at the end and, you know, the different locations and how it all unfolds. I'm happy to see that happening."

Erbe doesn't model Eames on anyone in particular, though she did meet a couple of female detectives for advice when researching for the role. It is,

- [Carmen: Bizet](#)
- [Scroll sparks bidding](#)
- ['Unpopular' art](#)


[+ More Arts](#)

## EPICURE

- [Eat treats](#) 
- [Espresso](#)
- [Growers' trump card](#)

[+ More Epicure](#)

## BOOKS

- [Prizes speak volumes](#) 
- [A politics-free zone](#)
- [A bold type of guy](#)

[+ More Books](#)

## Best Travel Deals

- [Aussie Holidays](#)
- [Latest Flight Deals](#)
- [Asia Holidays](#)

[view them now](#) 

## NEWS EMAIL

Get the freshest entertainment news by [email](#).

she says, a figment of her imagination, "sort of the fantasy ballsy version of myself!"

The success of the series does tear at her. On one hand she is delighted that viewers have appreciated the way the two actors have developed their good cop, bad cop games. She enjoys the part now more than ever, particularly when she is allowed to play "sort of the heavy".

The negatives?

"It takes up my whole life, really. I have a lot of heartache not being home for bedtime with my daughter, not getting to see my husband as much as I want, and not having any brain cells to sort of keep things going on the level I would like at home.

"The flipside of that as an actor here is well known, of course: the three months off at Christmas, knowing, relatively speaking, what your schedule is, and the luxury of not having to worry about work."

Erbe made her TV debut as Lynn Redgrave's daughter in the sitcom *Chicken Soup*, was cast in the highly acclaimed 1990 Broadway production of *The Grapes of Wrath*, and soon notched up her first major film credit as Richard Dreyfuss's daughter in the 1991 Bill Murray comedy *What About Bob?*

As to the Boston-born, New York-based Erbe's unfulfilled ambitions ... "Directing? Writing? No, no, not really. I'm far too lazy. But experience on this show has made me bossier about the stuff I will choose to do."

And when Detective Bobby Goren rocks his head quizzically at various angles, turns to her and, with a nod, suddenly swoops at the killer in their midst, she knows just where she wants to be. She is still happy to cop it sweet.

***Law & Order: Criminal Intent* screens on Sunday at 8.30pm on Channel Ten.**

 [Print this article](#)

 [Email to a friend](#)

 [Top](#)

 [Search all Fairfax archives](#) (\*[Fee](#) for full article)

---

[National](#) | [World](#) | [Breaking news](#) | [Features](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Sport](#) | [Realfooty](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Multimedia](#)

[text](#) | [handheld \(how to\)](#)

[membership](#) | [conditions](#) | [privacy](#)  
Copyright © 2004. The Age Company Ltd

[advertise](#) | [contact us](#)