

coverstory

BY GEORGE DICKIE



Camryn Manheim is among the stars of NBC's revival of "Law & Order," premiering Thursday.

Camryn Manheim helps maintain 'Law & Order' in original series' revival

When Camryn Manheim says that joining the revival of "Law & Order" brings her "full circle," she really means it.

The Emmy winner for "The Practice" had several of her earliest television roles – three different ones – as a guest star on executive producer Dick Wolf's long-running, franchise-spawning drama series. She returns to it as a regular for what NBC is calling its 21st season starting Thursday, Feb. 24, reinforcing Wolf's "Chicago"-show and "FBI" tradition by opening an all-"Law & Order" night that also includes the "Special Victims Unit" and "Organized Crime" spinoffs.

Merging returning cast members and new additions, "Law & Order" now casts Manheim as Lt. Kate Dixon, the boss of the New York police detectives played by returnee Anthony Anderson (fresh off "black-ish") and "Burn Notice" alum Jeffrey Donovan. Sam Waterston reprises his role as District Attorney Jack McCoy, and Hugh Dancy ("Hannibal") and Odelya Halevi ("Good Trouble") also are new to the series as prosecutors.

"I'd just gotten my master's degree from New York University," the friendly Manheim recalls, "and like every New York actor, it was my dream to get a guest shot on 'Law & Order.' I did a lot of Off-Broadway theater, and everyone would

write in their program bio who they wanted to thank ... and at the end, they would write how many times they'd appeared on 'Law & Order.' For several years, I couldn't say that, and it was probably one of my proudest moments when I could add, "Law & Order": One episode.' And then, 'Two episodes.' And then, 'Three episodes.'"

Now, Manheim says, "I'm not going to lie, I'm still in a little bit of shock. I'm moving from Los Angeles to New York, and I would not have done it for any other show." "Law & Order" has such a special place in my heart, and it's not just me, but all of New York. Actors dream to be on it, crew members' lives were made by it, and the city was vitzalized by it. It's very profound for me."

Manheim's Dixon effectively is the successor to Lt. Anita Van Buren, played through most of the original show's run by S. Epatha Merkerson (now on NBC's and producer Wolf's "Chicago Med").

"I think it takes a certain kind of woman to hold down this fort and make sure that everything works in tandem," Manheim notes, reasoning that Dixon "has to keep the D.A.'s office happy, she has to keep the police chief happy, and she has to get her detectives to do the work: And I think that with how bossy I am in general, they sensed that I could bring her to life."

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