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TV

## 'Law & Order' showrunner teases Mariska Hargitay's 'exciting' visit in finale

Showrunner Rick Eid goes over the returning series's rookie season and teases Season 2 plans.

 TAP TO UNMUTE

Sam Waterston, Anthony Anderson on potential 'Law & Order' guest stars

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**By Randee Dawn**

"Law & Order" and "Law & Order: SVU" fans, brace yourselves: "SVU" veteran Capt. Olivia Benson is set to appear in the original series's first new season finale!

"In the finale, Olivia Benson appears, which is exciting," "L&O" showrunner Rick Eid told TODAY on Friday. "Benson crosses with Detectives Cosgrove and Bernard; they need to talk to

her."

And what will they be talking to her about? Could be the big killing at the center of the finale, which airs May 19: According to Eid, an off-duty police officer who's a friend of Cosgrove's is shot, and the simmering tension between the police department and the district attorney's office comes to a head.



— Camryn Manheim, Anthony Anderson and Jeffrey Donovan on "Law & Order."

Virginia Sherwood / NBC

But Eid says they won't be introducing "some big cliffhanger" to the last episode of this new season. "It's more of an emotional finale," he says.

The fact that Benson is finally stopping by is a pleasure; the question is, why didn't she show up earlier? The premiere episode of the new "L&O's" first season was based on a crime the

Special Victims Unit would have explored, after all.

"There was no specific reason (for her not to be in that episode)," says Eid, "other than that we were building sets and writing scripts and doing other things. There definitely was a Special Victims backstory to it, but at the end of the day it was still a homicide. There just wasn't a compelling legal or evidentiary reason."



— Olivia Benson (Mariska Hargitay) is coming! But why not sooner? Heidi Gutman / NBC

Balancing the returned "L&O" with the version that ran from 1990-2010 has been something of a juggling act, he admits. "The show is so beloved and iconic that if you're going to bring it back you'd better try hard to live up to its standards," he says. "Things have changed and people have gotten used to a different, glossier look (to TV). We want you to feel like you're in (the room), but also make it pleasurable to watch."

What's interesting this time around is that "L&O," which used to tower over all of the spinoffs



(including "Special Victims Unit," "Criminal Intent" and "Trial by Jury"), is now the new kid on the block. So what does this mean for a second returning season (the show has not yet been officially picked up for Season 2)?

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For one thing, a crossover with "SVU" and "Organized Crime," says Eid. "That's something that will probably happen in Season 2. We've definitely been talking about a three-part crossover."

Eid says that after a 10-episode returning first season, they're still getting a grip on the dynamics of the show and its characters. He'd love to see more with Sam Waterston's DA Jack McCoy ("the more we can utilize Sam, the better"), and overall he says he'd love to tell more character-based stories, which would be a shift from "L&O's" prior "just the facts" approach.



— Hugh Dancy with Sam Waterston (c.) and Odelya Halevi on "L&O." Will Hart / NBC

They're doing that in the last three episodes of the new season, he explains. "You'll learn more about people. But it takes awhile to get your feet under you, and find out how everything intersects. We're trying to be faithful to the original, but you're also looking to find ways to tweak things here and there."

Overall, Eid, who's worked on other series ranging from "Trial By Jury" to "FBI" and "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," says he wants to ensure the returning series continues to be "a cultural conversation."

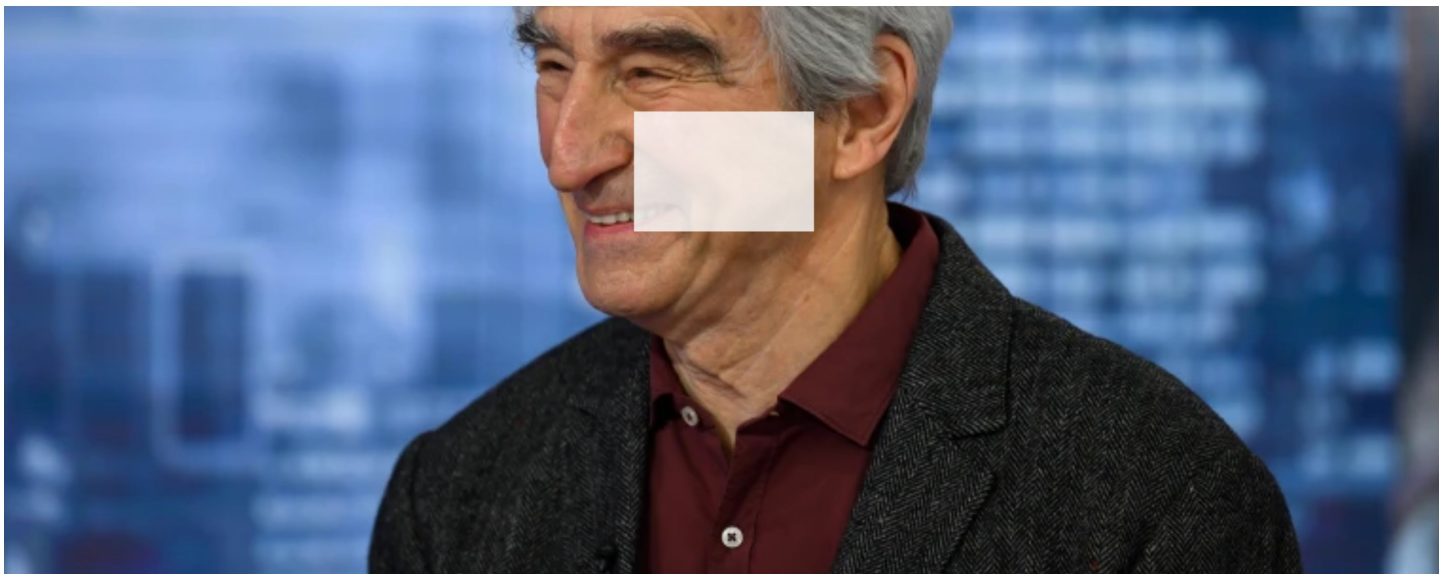


— The cast of the returned "Law & Order." Virginia Sherwood / NBC

"It holds up a mirror to what's going on in society, and in that sense it's timeless," he continues. "We're always looking at each episode as a cultural conversation with differing points of view."



## Sam Waterston on the return of 'Law &amp; Order'

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