



Actor Robert Iler of "The Sopranos" is taken into custody by police yesterday. He was charged with robbery after alleged role in theft of \$40 from two teenagers.

DAVID J. PHILLIPS/DAILY NEWS

Life's imitating art

'Sopranos' teen actor nabbed on robbery charges

A NEW SCRIPT

The skinny on actor Robert Iler and his character, Anthony Soprano Jr.

ROBERT ILER		ANTHONY SOPRANO JR.
Upper East Side	RESIDENCE	New Jersey suburb
16	AGE	15
Charged with robbery, marijuana possession and possession of drug paraphernalia.	PROBLEMS	Caught smoking pot in family garage, swiped sacramental wine, showed up drunk for gym, vandalized school swimming pool and cheated on a geometry test.
Up to 15 years in prison	POSSIBLE PUNISHMENT	Threat of military school, no TV, no Nintendo
After missing a lot of classes, home-schooling with a tutor.	SCHOOL	Expelled from school for cheating on a geometry test.
Notre Dame	COLLEGE ASPIRATIONS	None
Mom works for Transit Authority; dad lives upstate	FAMILY	Mom is a housewife; dad is a capo in N.J. mob.
Jennifer Love Hewitt	CRUSH	Jennifer Love Hewitt
Silpknot, Slayer	MUSIC	Silpknot, Slayer
Rap sheet	READING MATERIAL	"The Stranger," by Albert Camus

By RALPH R. ORTEGA, RICHARD WER and ALICE McQUILLAN
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Baby Bing now has a real rap sheet.

The young actor who plays the son of TV mobster Tony Soprano helped rob two teenagers of \$40 in Manhattan, authorities said yesterday. He allegedly threatened his victims with "You want to die?" cops said.

Like a typical wiseguy, actor Robert Iler, 16, joked after his arrest, slept like a baby in his jail cell and denied any role in the street holdup.

He cut off a cop who was incredulous that Iler, who has been on the HBO hit "The Sopranos" since he turned 13, would be mixed up in a petty heist.

"You've got a good acting career. Why would you do something like this?" the cop asked him.

"Why are you concerned about my career?" Iler shot back, the cop said.

Iler's eyes were bloodshot when he was arrested early yesterday and he was carrying a bag of marijuana and a pipe to smoke it, police said.

"I was just getting high with my friends," Iler allegedly told police. His defense attorney, Steven Mintz, said he was unaware of that statement.

Iler's character on "The Sopranos," A.J. (Anthony Soprano), has been sliding deeper into trouble. A.J. smoked pot in the family garage, vandalized his high school and got expelled for cheating on a geometry exam.

His FBI code name on the show is Baby Bing, after the Soprano-controlled strip club, the Bada Bing.

In the real-life trouble, Iler and three others were charged with robbery for allegedly ambushing two 16-year-old boys outside a closed deli on E. 74th St. and York Ave.

The victims, one a tourist from Brazil, said four teenagers surrounded them at a pay phone shortly after midnight.

"Give me your money," ordered the oldest suspect, Michael Courmede, 19, of Queens, police said.

Iler and two others allegedly echoed Courmede, adding, "You want to die?" according to police.

One victim handed over \$30, and Courmede took \$10 from the other teen's wallet, cops said.

Officers Mike Foley and Steven Camp responded to the victims and found Iler and the others sitting on benches outside John Jay Park on 78th St., a hangout for pot smokers.

Police said the victims identified Iler, Courmede, Alban Selimaj, 16, of Manhattan, and a 15-year-old charged as a juvenile as the robbers.

Courmede, who had the stolen cash, was also charged

with carrying a box cutter, which he didn't use during the heist, cops said.

At the 19th Precinct stationhouse, a handcuffed Iler, who lives with his mother in Manhattan, said, "Bring the people over here. I didn't do anything. Tell them to point me out."

Iler spent the night in a holding cell pending arraignment last night. His attorney said Iler didn't rob anyone and that his client had his back turned and was talking to a girl when the trouble began.

"He was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and apparently an older kid who he doesn't really know may have done something which Robert didn't see, didn't hear and didn't know anything about until the police picked up the group of four people," Mintz said.

Iler's mother, grandfather, uncle, manager and two cousins waited for his arraignment at Manhattan Criminal Court. Fellow "Sopranos" actor Jason Cerbone, 23, who played Jackie Aprile Jr. in the season finale, was also on hand.

Wearing a blue T-shirt, black cargo pants and sneakers, Iler pleaded not guilty and was freed on \$2,500 bail. The next hearing was set for July 9.

"It's very uncharacteristic of him," said his mother, Helen Iler, 35. "He's very polite, charming, respectful. He's a good kid."

With Emily Gest, Lisa L. Colangelo and Yael Kohen



Actor Robert Iler (c.) plays A.J. (Anthony) Soprano on the hit show "The Sopranos." His parents are played by James Gandolfini (f) and Eric Falco.

DAILY NEWS • Thursday, July 5, 2001