"This One's From the Heart" is the closest thing we're ever going to get to a Vic Fontaine album. Vic Fontaine was a holographic singer in the TV series Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. He 'lived' in a similarly holographic 1960s Las Vegas bar, where he routinely entertained the clientele by croonning classic love-songs, accompanied by his band.

Like many characters in that well-loved series, he initially only appeared in the occasional episode, but became so popular that by the final season he was appearing almost weekly. One thing that disappointed me about the big 90s Star Trek revival, was all the franchises' tendency to drop science-fiction storylines in favor of more human-interest ones. Yet every time that Vic came on and sang another timeless number, I was enthralled.

In all of Vic's episodes, I don't think the writers ever gave him a single duff line. The character oozed coolness without needing anyone else to routinely remark upon it, and it was easy to understand why the rest of the cast hung around his bar so much.

One of the less-recognized reasons why Vic's material flowed so smoothly was the way in which it had been recorded. Usually when TV/film characters are seen singing on camera, the actors have dubbed their performances later, but not so here. 'Vic Fontaine' performed live and unplugged, as did his band. But the main reason for the character's success needs no explanation - actor / singer James Darren. Quite simply, the man has a beautiful voice, and knows how to sing with it. It's no wonder that DS9 writer Hans Beimler remarked "We don't have to look any further: James Darren is Vic Fontaine."

When the series sadly reached the end of its life, Darren rerecorded most of his character's numbers for this CD, and released it under his own name. Also, since the songs are classics, there was no need to make this an official Star Trek release, and the album effortlessly stands-up as a superb collection of old-time music in its own right. Well of course it does, Darren's been doing this stuff for decades.

This isn't a criticism, but to me James Darren performs each track the same way - with respect, care and conviction. However above all he makes every one of them sound so easy. As one who enjoyed all seven seasons of Deep Space Nine, and particularly his character's contribution to the later ones, all I can say is:

Cheers, pallie.

http://stevegoble.blogspot.com/2010/03/this-ones-from-heart-james-darren.html
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