

An evening with James Darren

Gidget's Dreamboat Sings And Swing
By Charles Tatum



Photo: Michael Hillier

Some know him as Moondoggie from the early Gidget movies, while others remember his Top Ten hits such as “goodbye Cruel World” and “Her Royal Majesty” from the early sixties. And yet another generation knows James Darren best as Officer Jim Corrigan fighting crime alongside William Shatner and Heather Locklear in the eighties TV series “T.J. Hooker.” A jack-of-all-trades for more than four decades, Darren is now focusing his energies solely on music as he performs around the country with a 17-piece orchestra. Catch his act in nightly performances Feb. 24-27 at the Orleans Showroom.

Darren sings the great songs of the past 50 years, including lots of Great American Songbook classics and some newer material from the rock ‘n roll era. His songlist includes “My Kind of Girl”, “Blame it On My Youth”, “Boulevard of Broken Dreams” and “Can’t Take My Eyes Off You”. He names among his idols Nat “King” Cole, Frankie Laine and Tony Bennett – The last name on that list being someone to whom Darren has often been compared.

When Darren hears someone compare his voice to that of Bennett he shies from the comparison – even though he knows it’s a splendid compliment. Darren said he doesn’t want to appear to be mimicking Bennett, preferring to always find his own voice.

“If I hear it, I fight it, because I don’t want anybody to say I’m doing Tony Bennett,” says Darren, who spent most of the last 15 years directing TV shows and films, although he did accept one memorable acting role playing Vic Fontaine in the TV series “Star Trek: Deep Space Nine.”

Darren said he loved playing the role of the hologram-like character Vic Fontaine and wished “Deep Space Nine” was still on the air. “I had actually turned down the show three times because I didn’t want to play a singer.” Darren said. “I had not acted since “T.J. Hooker” Finally, my agent said, “Why don’t you at least do them the courtesy of reading the script.” And once I read the script, I said I wanted to do it.”

During the last 15 years, Darren spent the bulk of his time directing television shows, including several movies of the week and episodes of “Beverly Hills 90210”, “Melrose Place”, and “Walker, Texas Ranger”.

The TV world’s loss of a good director is a godsend for those who love great music. You’re guaranteed to enjoy the song stylings of Darren in the acoustically perfect Orleans Showroom.