His Way

Episode Written by Ira Steven Behr & Hans Beimler

Synopsis by John Sayer/1998

Dr. Julian Bashir of Station *Deep Space Nine* shows his friend’s a.new'Holosuite program. In a 1960’s Las Vegas lounge, entertainer Vic Fontaine croons, “You’re Nobody 'til, Somebody Loves You” to a packed house.

While Odo, Major Kira, Chief O’Brien and Lieutenant Commanders Dax and Worf enjoy the music, Bashir informs them that the singer is like any other hologram they’ve ever met. “Pretty sweet pipes for a light bulb.” Vic Fontaine brags to them. “That’s what I am right? A collection of photons ad force fields – you know your basic heuristic, fully interactive hologram.”

The doctor notes that Vic was designed to be self-aware. “He thought it would give him the right attitude for the era.” Furthermore, the charming Fontaine seems to have uncanny insight into the human heart, easily picking out Dax and Worf as a newly married couple, noting that O’Brien’s wife is away…then stopping short when he regards Odo and Kira.

After they leave the lounge, Bashir invites them back the following night for an evening of music and gambling. Dax observes that Kira won’t be able to join…

**His Way**

Odo learns to do it Sinatra-style as romance blooms with Kira

Written by Anna L. Kaplan/1998

If you were channel surfing back in the middle of April in 1998, you might think that you found a television broadcast of James Darren singing at a Las Vegas nightclub. But if you kept watching, you would discover that he was playing a character named Vic Fontaine. You probably wouldn’t guess that Darren’s character was a hologram created for Dr. Bashir on DEEP SPACE NINE. He was performing in "His Way,” a delightful romantic comedy written by Ira Steven Behr and Hans Beimler.

Executive producer Behr thought of Vic Fontaine quite some time ago. “Robert Wolfe and I wrote a scene for Vic Fontaine about three seasons ago,” said Behr. “Originally I had this idea of having Frank Sinatra Jr. play the role. I’ve seen Frank in concert a couple of times in Las Vegas, and I just loved his act. I thought it would be very cool to have Frank Jr. do it. He wanted to do the show. He’s a fan of the show, it turns out. But he wanted to play an alien. He didn’t want to play a singer. He turned us down, so we took it out of the show. The following year, Rene Echevarria, in one of the Odo-Kira shows took a shot at doing a one-scene thing. But it was one of those shows that just suddenly kicked-in for me. I came in and said, “We're going to do Vic Fontaine, but we are not going to do it as a one scene, one shot thing. We're going to do a whole episode about it. It will be a wonderful offbeat way of getting Kira and Odo together."

Behr continued; “I was at a memorabilia show with a friend of mine where they have performers sing autographs, and you can buy movie memorabilia. There was James Darren, and my buddy went over to get his autograph and began talking to him. I just stood there and watched. After my friend was done, I said, “You know, I’m doing a show on DEEP SPACE NINE and I think this guy would be really perfect for it. I think I’m going to talk to him.” My friend, who is a writer and producer, said, “No man, you can’t do that. Not here. He’ll think you’re a mental patient.” I said, “You just talked to him for five minutes about the spaghetti sauce that he use to have. If he doesn’t think you’re a mental patient then he’s not going to think I’m a mental patient. Besides I have a business card.” He said. “No, no, no. Don’t do it here. Don’t do it.” So he talked me out of it, and then we walked around for a while, and I kept coming back and looking at this guy. He said, “No, you can’t do it. This isn’t the place. Go back on Monday to the office and call the casting guy and do it through the official channels.” So that’s what I did. I talked to Ron Surma, and we sent a script over.

“He came in. We weren’t even clear whether he was going to audition or just come in and meet. That day I went to a restaurant with the writing staff, not unlike the time with “Trials and Tribble-ations” when we ran into Charlie Brill. We were sitting there eating. I said James Darren is coming to audition. They said “Who?” because they are all young. I said, “You know, TIME TUNNEL.” Nothing. I said “Moon Doggie.” Nothing. I said, “T.J. HOOKER, God Damn it, with William Shatner.” “Oh, T.J. HOOKER.” That reference they got. All of a sudden this huge, six foot four guy leans over. He’s waiting for a table and he says, “Excuse me, I know this is going to sound absolutely crazy, but you’re talking about my father. I’m Christian Darren, and my father is coming in at two o’clock to meet with you. I don’t want to interrupt your meal, but I just want to say, you’re going to love him.” I knew right away that once again the hand of God was reaching down to show us the way.

“Jimmy came in and he was unbelievable. He was everything I wanted the character to be. He was cool, he was hip, but he was accessible. There was nothing sleazy, there was nothing arrogant. He was the best form of cool you could find. He was totally comfortable with himself. He understood the milieu. He’d been there. He knew Frank, he knew Dean, he knew the whole nine yards. As he was talking to us he started to slip into a story about Frank and Dean. It took us all about 20 seconds, including Ron Surma who was there with us to read with him, to realize he had gone from just schmoozing with us to actually auditioning. He was reading lines from the script. It was so effortless we thought he was still just talking to us. He was the guy.”

Added co-writer, Hans Beimler, “Jimmy was so elegant and wonderful. We hadn’t really seen anybody else yet for the part. We were all just floored by him. Ira always wants to make sure that we have uncovered every stone in doing everything, especially casting. My little claim to fame in this moment is that I stood up and said, “Vic Fontaine just sat in this chair. We’re doing a show about gambling, and you guys don’t want to role the dice?” Ira said, “You’re right. We found our Vic Fontaine.”

Behr enthused about the shoot, “it was one of the happiest working experiences I’ve ever had. It was a terrific thing. I’ve never seen the crew happier. They told me, given the fact they still had to come into work and spend their days on the sound stage, it was like a vacation for them. They loved the set. They loved him. They just loved the whole thing. (Director) Allan Kroeker did an incredible job. Nana (Visitor) did an incredible job, and Rene (Auberjonois) did an unbelievable job. It hit every base and every button I wanted it to hit. It was sweet, it was tender, it was funny, it was real, it was romantic. They should all work out that well.

“Jimmy Darren loved it, and it showed. There isn’t a false moment in it. There wasn’t even a false moment in dailies. He was just there. He’s been directing for years, so he knows the camera, he’s a total pro. So when you have Rene Auberjonois and Nana Visitor and Jimmy Darren – pro, pro, pro. It’s just great.

Darren did not sing his hit song, “Goodbye Cruel World”, but did do a rendition of “You’re Nobody Until Somebody Loves You”, “Come Fly with Me”, and “I’ve Got You Under My Skin”. Beimler noted, “I think of “His Way” as the first musical on DEEP SPACE NINE. Musicals are very difficult to make work, and I know that because Ira and I did FAME together, the television series. It was a learning experience in terms of how difficult it is to tell a good story in a musical. When you hit it, it feels great, because it combines all the elements. There’s nothing like a musical to make it happen.”

Another fan of the show, co-executive producer Ronald D. Moore said, “I got just a kick out of “His Way”, and the whole crew did too. The crew and cast just really love him. It’s such a different place. When they put up that Vegas lounge and Jimmy is up there singing, everyone is really in a good mood. It changes the whole ambiance. “His Way” I think is a really good show. It’s fun. I’m glad to use all of the music. It set a different note. I think it was the most romantic show that we have done. A lot of times the romances on STAR TREK have just been unsatisfying. I haven’t liked a lot of the romances that I’ve worked on or been involved with on TNG or DS9. That was one where I did feel it. When Odo and Kira are out at dinner, and Jimmy appears and starts singing, “I’ve Got You Under My Skin”, to me that’s a movie moment, that’s magic. They get up, and they dance. It’s a great song, and the setting is perfect, and the mood is right. The two characters have been moving towards this moment for a few years, it’s just a great show.”

Moore continued, “James Darren is just delightful. He makes the role. He is so perfect in the role. You like the guy, you believe the guy, he’s not over the top in it, but he’s playing the role. I love the fact that he’s self-aware. He knows he’s a hologram, and he’s not really concerned about it. I’m glad we were able to stretch and break some of the rules of how holodeck characters work. I don’t care ultimately whether or not he can get on the comm line and call Odo. I wanted him to. It was great to just play the scene. Let him call Odo, let Odo react to it. You have to let that kind of episode roll over you, you just have to sit back and have a good time. That’s really what the show is about.”

Not only did Darren return for the season finale “Tears of the Prophets,” but he will be back for season seven. Said Beimler, “He’s very professional. He’s directed enough ad been an actor long enough to know exactly where the camera is. He makes very smart moves, little tiny things that focus your eye on him, without upstaging other actors. He’s a very generous actor. It’s just a pleasure to work with him. We wrote a wonderful scene for him for the first episode (of next year). We love Jimmy.”