

= Beyond the Sea (film) =

Beyond the Sea is a 2004 American biographical film based on the life of singer / actor Bobby Darin . Starring in the lead role and using his own singing voice for the musical numbers , Kevin Spacey co @-@ wrote , directed , and co @-@ produced the film , which takes its title from Darin 's hit version of the song of the same name .

Beyond the Sea depicts Darin 's rise to success in both the music and film industry during the 1950s and 1960s , as well as his marriage to Sandra Dee , portrayed by Kate Bosworth .

As early as 1986 , Barry Levinson intended to direct a film based on the life of Darin , and he began pre @-@ production on the project in early 1997 . When he eventually vacated the director 's position , Spacey , along with Darin 's son Dodd , acquired the film rights .

Beyond the Sea was released in December 2004 to mixed reviews from critics and bombed at the box office . Dodd Darin , Sandra Dee and former Darin manager Steve Blauner responded with enthusiastic feedback to Spacey 's work on the film . Despite a number of negative reviews , some critics praised Spacey 's performance , largely due to his decision to use his own singing voice . He received a Golden Globe nomination .

= = Plot = =

Rather than providing a straightforward biography , the film weaves fantasy sequences with scenes containing somewhat fictionalized accounts of events in Darin 's life , and throughout it , the adult singer interacts with his younger self . It chronicles his determination to rise from his working class roots as Walden Robert Cassotto , a frail Bronx boy plagued by multiple bouts of rheumatic fever , and become a singer more famous than Frank Sinatra . To achieve that goal , he forms a band and struggles to find gigs at any nightclub that will hire him .

His agent gets Darin a recording contract with Atlantic Records , where the singer enjoys teen idol success with " Splish Splash " . Not wanting to limit his appeal to rock and roll audiences , he changes his niche to big band singing and records major hits , such as " Mack the Knife . " To capitalize on his popularity with teenage and young adult audiences , Darin is cast in Come September opposite Sandra Dee . He falls in love with the eighteen @-@ year @-@ old actress and , determined to marry her , he romantically seduces and enchants her with songs like " Beyond the Sea " and " Dream Lover . " The two elope , angering her mother . Darin finally realizes his own mother 's dream when he is signed to appear at the famed Copacabana nightclub in Manhattan .

As success takes him on the road and away from home , Dee begins to drink heavily , and the couple fights frequently . Eventually they separate , then reconcile . She gives birth to a son , Dodd . To his actress wife 's chagrin , Darin is nominated for the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his performance as a shell shocked soldier in Captain Newman , M.D ..

In the late 1960s , Darin becomes involved in the campaign to elect Robert F. Kennedy for President and contemplates a political career of his own . His sister Nina , knowing his past will be investigated closely if Bobby opts to enter the political arena , shocks him with the news his beloved mother actually was his grandmother and he is Nina 's illegitimate child , the son of a father she cannot identify .

Devastated , Darin becomes a recluse living in a trailer on the Big Sur coast in California . He finds himself out of step with changing music trends , and when he tries to adapt by incorporating folk music and protest songs into his repertoire , he finds himself rejected by the audience that once embraced him . Undaunted , he stages a show , complete with a gospel choir , at the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas , and against all odds it is a huge success .

But his triumph is short @-@ lived . Suffering from blood poisoning following surgery to repair his mechanical heart valve , Darin is rushed to the hospital , where he dies at the age of thirty @-@ seven . Following his death , he meets the younger counterpart of himself once again , and the two duet with " As Long As I 'm Singing . "

= = Cast = =

Kevin Spacey as Bobby Darin , who rises from his lower class roots to become one of the most popular rock and roll and big band performers of all time .

Kate Bosworth as Sandra Dee , the popular actress who marries Bobby . Although they divorced in 1967 , Sandra said she has always truly and deeply loved him , and that she always will , and thus never remarried .

Bob Hoskins as Charlie Maffia , who serves as a father figure and considers Bobby to be his son .

John Goodman as Stephen Blauner , Bobby 's dedicated talent manager . Blauner later becomes a successful film producer with movies such as The King of Marvin Gardens (1972) and Drive , He Said (1971) .

Brenda Blethyn as Polly Cassotto , Bobby 's biological maternal grandmother , who teaches him the art of music as a child .

Caroline Aaron as Nina Cassotto Maffia , Bobby 's biological mother , whom he believed to be his older sister . Nina tells him the shocking truth when he is thirty @-@ three years old .

Greta Scacchi as Mary Douvan , Sandra 's overprotective mother .

Peter Cincotti as Dick Behrke , Bobby 's arranger and pianist .

Matt Rippey as David Gershenson , Bobby 's publicist .

William Ullrich as young Bobby .

Cathy Moriarty @-@ Gentile and Vanessa Redgrave were originally cast in Beyond the Sea , but both actresses dropped out for unspecified reasons .

= = Development = =

= = = Barry Levinson = = =

Beginning in 1986 , Barry Levinson intended to produce and direct a biopic based on the life of Bobby Darin with funding from his own production company , Baltimore Pictures . With writer Lewis Colick , Levinson pitched the idea to Warner Bros. Pictures , who agreed to co @-@ finance The Bobby Darin Story and cover distribution duties . Producer Arthur Friedman , a fan of Darin 's work , began to laboriously negotiate for crucial music licensing rights with Darin 's ex @-@ wife , Sandra Dee ; his son , Dodd ; and former manager Steve Blauner . Colick wrote the first draft in 1987 before Warner Bros. and Levinson commissioned rewrites from Paul Attanasio and Paul Schrader . Their scripts , which kept The Bobby Darin Story title , concentrated on Sandra Dee 's alcoholism and childhood molestation by her stepfather . David Gershenson , Darin 's longtime friend , publicist and manager , joined the project as a historical consultant . Tom Cruise was reportedly under consideration to portray Darin .

Meanwhile , in May 1994 , Warner Bros. optioned Dodd Darin 's book , Dream Lovers (ISBN 0 @-@ 446 @-@ 51768 @-@ 2) . James Toback and Lorenzo Carcaterra were hired to rewrite Attanasio 's The Bobby Darin Story , which they re @-@ titled Dreamer , in an attempt to incorporate the information present in Dodd Darin 's Dream Lovers . Toback 's script heavily focused on Darin 's childhood rheumatic fever and lifelong struggle with heart disease . It also followed the previous Attanasio and Schrader scripts . Carcaterra 's detailed research included Darin 's music records , home videos , early television clips , authorized and unauthorized biographies , newspaper articles and magazine interviews . " I decided to meet with a lot of real @-@ life people associated with Bobby Darin until [Levinson] said it was taking the focus off of Bobby , " Carcaterra explained . As a result , some of the writer 's favorite scenes , including a Las Vegas confrontation with Elvis Presley , were omitted from his third and final draft , which came in at a lengthy 164 pages .

Beginning in 1994 , Kevin Spacey first offered his services to portray Bobby Darin , but the filmmakers believed the actor was too old . Around this time , Spacey coincidentally performed the cover version of Darin 's " That Old Black Magic " for the soundtrack of Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil . The actor explained that after 1994 , " at least three times a year , my manager would call over to Warner Bros. and say , ' Hey , what 's happening with that Bobby Darin movie ?

You guys ever going to make it ? ' ' "

With filming to originally begin in late @-@ 1997 , pre @-@ production for Dreamer was commencing , and Levinson began to discuss the film with various actors . This included Johnny Depp as Bobby Darin , Drew Barrymore as Sandra Dee , Bette Midler as Darin 's birth mother Nina and Bruno Kirby as Nina 's husband / Darin 's right @-@ hand man , Charlie Mafia . Levinson eventually vacated the director 's position in favor of Liberty Heights (1999) ; because he was unable to get Dreamer into production , Warner Bros. lost the music licensing rights , which reverted to the Darin estate .

= = = Kevin Spacey = = =

In March 1999 , Dick Clark Productions announced their teaming with Dodd Darin on a biopic , with collaboration from producer Arthur Friedman , who had been developing both The Bobby Darin Story and Dreamer with Levinson at Warner Bros. since 1986 . Shortly afterwards , Spacey was in discussions with Dodd Darin to star in the lead role . Spacey was able to acquire the film rights from Warner Bros. in early @-@ 2000 . With the help of Dodd Darin , the actor also received exclusive music rights for no charge . With his Academy Award @-@ winning performance in American Beauty (1999) , Paramount Pictures became interested in distributing / financing Beyond the Sea . The deal fell apart when Paramount told Spacey was that he was too old for the role and instead wanted Leonardo DiCaprio . Beginning in October 2000 , Spacey took vocal training lessons from Darin collaborator Roger Kellaway to give an accurate portrayal of the singer .

Spacey also kept close relations with the Darin family as a means to know he would treat the film " with respect " . He sent letters to that effect to Sandra Dee and son Dodd . Steve Blauner (who is portrayed by John Goodman in the film) also served as a historical consultant . Dodd originally considered Spacey 's plan to sing his father 's material a sacrilege , but eventually fell into sync with Spacey 's deeply empathetic approach to Darin 's life .

Tom Epperson , who had struck up a friendship with Spacey while writing an early screenplay draft of The Shipping News , was hired to write a new draft for Beyond the Sea . Epperson 's script included Darin 's penchant for orgies after his divorce with Sandra Dee . Spacey , finding the Epperson script to be overtly dark and morbid , began to rewrite Beyond the Sea , incorporating info from the 1987 Lewis Colick script . Spacey acknowledged he portrayed Darin in an exaggeratedly sympathetic way , and decided not to centrally depict the darker side of Darin 's life . " The other scripts made Bobby [Darin] a rather unlikable figure , " he explained . " I was not interested in making a conventional biopic , as you can see from the results . I was interested in making an exuberant celebration of an entertainer in a way that would be uplifting for an audience . "

By making the biopic , Dodd Darin and Spacey acknowledged the similar career experiences between Darin and Spacey . " A lot of people doubted my dad 's abilities , and Kevin 's had doubters and naysayers , " Dodd commented . " But both [men] were willing to take risks , and both were very resilient . My dad would always try new things . You could never pin him down . Kevin 's career is similar . " David Evanier , author of Roman Candle : The Life of Bobby Darin (ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 59486 @-@ 010 @-@ 2) , said " You can put Kevin 's obsessiveness about getting the film made right up there with Bobby 's obsessiveness . He 's also the ideal person to play Bobby . He has an uncanny physical resemblance to him , and he also has Bobby 's intensity and dark side . Also , there 's the connection with his mother . Bobby 's mother 's belief in him sent him soaring . Kevin 's mother wanted him to make this film . Kevin sees the film as an act of devotion to his mother . "

" I think the movie is about mothers and sons , " Spacey said , referring to Darin 's relationship with his mother Polly and sister Nina . Spacey 's mother , Kathleen Fowler , died of brain cancer just before production started . " I made the movie for all mothers , but especially for my mother . She introduced me to Bobby Darin . When she got very ill in 2002 , I stopped everything and took care of her . We constantly played Bobby Darin records , and I 'd let her listen to the tracks I was recording . I 'm glad she passed knowing this was the movie I was going to make . " After his award @-@ winning performances in The Usual Suspects and American Beauty , Spacey " chose to move away

from dark , sarcastic characters , and instead play damaged but good @-@ hearted men " in films like Pay It Forward , K @-@ PAX and The Shipping News . The actor was criticized for his career move ; Spacey acknowledged the similarities when Darin integrated into folk music and protest songs .

= = = Production = = =

In February 2003 , it was announced that production for Beyond the Sea was becoming fast tracked with Spacey as lead actor , co @-@ writer , producer and director , and Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer (MGM) agreed to cover distribution duties in North America . The following August , with principal photography to begin in just weeks , MGM dropped out as distributor and main financier over scheduling conflicts . To accumulate financing of the film 's \$ 25 million budget , which came from foreign production companies , Spacey performed six songs at the November 2003 American Film Market . Lions Gate Entertainment quickly picked up the distribution duties and Spacey found enough investors from England and Germany to continue to move forward on production .

In addition , Spacey declined to be paid for his work as actor , director , co @-@ writer and producer on Beyond the Sea . A portion of the \$ 25 million budget came from his own Trigger Street Productions . Producer Arthur Friedman , who had shepherded the biopic since 1987 , commented that he and Spacey experienced creative differences during pre @-@ production . Friedman remarked that he was not involved with Beyond the Sea once production began in Germany . Filming was originally set to begin in June 2003 before it was pushed to November 7 , 2003 , lasting until late @-@ January 2004 . 80 % of Beyond the Sea was shot using sound stages at Babelsberg Studios in Germany and Pinewood Studios in England . Lulworth Cove , Dorset , South West England doubled for Darin 's setting of reclusiveness in Big Sur , California . In an attempt to convincingly portray Darin , particularly during the early stages of the singer 's life depicted in the film , Spacey hired prosthetic makeup designer Peter King from The Lord of the Rings film trilogy .

= = Release = =

= = = Marketing = = =

To promote Beyond the Sea , Spacey and Phil Ramone devised a 12 @-@ city United States concert tour titled An Evening Celebrating the Music of Bobby Darin , which consisted of Spacey performing with a 19 @-@ piece band . " It 's me singing Bobby and talking about Bobby and talking a little bit about the movie , " Spacey explained in June 2004 . Spacey dressed in costumes from the movie for the tour , which started in San Francisco and traveled through Los Angeles , New York City , Boston , Chicago , Miami and Atlantic City before ending in the Wayne Newton Theatre at the Stardust Hotel in Las Vegas . Spacey 's performance at the Waldorf @-@ Astoria Hotel on December 11 , 2004 received a standing ovation . Dodd Darin commented , " It was said about my dad that he had some big brass ones . To do a film about my dad is one thing , but it 's another thing to go out and attempt to work a nightclub . Kevin 's got a lot of courage . I think he sounds good . " The film was shown and promoted at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 11 , 2004 .

= = = WGA arbitration = = =

Beginning in October 2004 , the Writers Guild of America , west conducted arbitration through the scripts that had been written since Barry Levinson developed the film at Warner Bros. in 1987 . Lewis Colick , James Toback and Tom Epperson disassociated themselves for credit by the WGA . The Guild justified credit to Lewis Colick , who wrote the first draft of The Bobby Darin Story in 1987 , and Kevin Spacey . Actor @-@ writer Jeffrey Meek believed he should have deserved credit ; he was paid \$ 85 @,@ 000 of a promised \$ 125 @,@ 000 to settle his claim to have performed writing

services .

Spacey said Meek was " not a hired writer " on Beyond the Sea . " He turned in a draft , but it was a draft based on earlier material based on my own screenplays , " Spacey commented . Meek said he was hired by producer Harvey Friedman , a friend who stood up at his wedding and helped connect him with Spacey , with whom he claims to have produced 12 drafts , including one that was reported by Variety to have received a greenlight from MGM in early 2003 . " He bought my material and then acted like I didn 't exist , " Meek explained . " I 'm not saying I 'm Rembrandt , but it 's like someone buying a painting and then scratching the name off of it and putting their own there . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Beyond the Sea received mixed reviews from critics . Based on 147 reviews collected by Rotten Tomatoes , 42 % of the critics gave the film a positive review , with an average score of 5 @. @ 2 / 10 . Metacritic calculated a weighted average score of 46 / 100 , based on 35 reviews .

Sandra Dee , Dodd Darin , Jimmy Scalia and Steve Blauner responded enthusiastically to Spacey 's work on the film . Mick LaSalle of the San Francisco Chronicle felt Spacey looked too old to portray Darin convincingly and called the film " one of the most embarrassing spectacles of 2004 " and " jaw @-@ droppingly awful , a misbegotten and ill @-@ conceived vanity project . " Desson Thomson from The Washington Post praised the actor 's work , but also felt Spacey did not convincingly portray Darin in his early music career . Internet reviewer James Berardinelli found the storyline to be overtly clichéd , but added , " Despite the choppy narrative and inappropriate casting of Spacey , Beyond the Sea managed to keep me entertained . "

Roger Ebert gave a largely positive review , stating that , " Kevin Spacey believes he was born to play Bobby Darin . I believe he was born to play more interesting characters ... In his own best work , Spacey has achieved genius ; he is better as an actor than Darin ever was as a singer . " Stephen Holden of The New York Times felt that " with Beyond the Sea , Spacey crawls back from his doomed quest to be a Tom Hanks @-@ like everyman to his niche on the underbelly of Hollywood 's pantheon . The movie 's a mess , and at 45 , Spacey is far too old to play Darin . Yet the star captures his desperation , his braggadocio , and yes , his magnetism . " Peter Travers , writing in Rolling Stone magazine , believed Spacey could not prevent " the movie from groaning under the weight of biopic clichés . But the actor forges a bond with his subject that rights all wrongs . Doing his own singing (an uncanny imitation) , Spacey is a marvel . "

= = = Box office = = =

The film opened in limited release in the United States on December 17 , 2004 and went into wider release on December 29 . It grossed \$ 6 @, @ 318 @, @ 709 in the US and \$ 2 @, @ 128 @, @ 906 in international markets for a total worldwide box office of \$ 8 @, @ 447 @, @ 615 . It was declared a box office bomb because it did not make back its \$ 25 million budget .

= = = Accolades = = =

Spacey was nominated for the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor - Motion Picture Musical or Comedy but lost to Jamie Foxx for Ray . He and Phil Ramone were also nominated for the Grammy Award for Best Compilation Soundtrack Album for a Motion Picture , Television or Other Visual Media , but lost to the producers of Ray .

= = Home media = =

On June 7 , 2005 , the film was released on DVD in widescreen anamorphic format for Region 1

markets . It features two Dolby Digital English audio tracks (one in 2 @. @ 0 Stereo and the other in 5 @. @ 1 Surround Sound) , director 's commentary by Spacey , and a making @-@ of featurette .