

“In a Mirror, Darkly”: B+



One hundred years before the time of Captain Kirk, Evil Captain Archer takes his ship into Tholian space to claim a prize: the lost ship from TOS’s “Tholian Web” episode.

Air date: April 22, 2005

Written by Mike Sussman

Directed by James L. Conway

“The Tholians quantum-dated a piece of the hull. This ship is not only from another universe, it’s from another time: about a hundred years into the future. Imagine the technology we can find on that ship!” —Archer

Taking its title from Corinthians 13:12, this *ENT* episode sticks a foot in the world of *TOS*, courtesy of the first fully built *TOS*-style bridge set to grace a Paramount soundstage since the original Enterprise.

Unlike convoluted fan fiction, which can collapse under its own weight when the writer tries to tie together too many elements, Mike Sussman’s idea here is simple yet fantastic: what if the ship that disappeared in anomalous space in “The Tholian Web” were to appear in Archer’s time in an alternate universe? Suddenly, you have a prequel/sequel that allows the cast and crew of *ENT* to create new characters while visiting an old setting.

Taking place entirely in the mirror universe (which necessitates an alternate credit sequence), most of this one is about establishing the mirror characters and their situation, with a skeletal plot that sees Archer take over the ship and lock it on course (much like Spock in “The Menagerie”) while some unknown crewmember attempts to thwart his plans. With no “regular” characters to ground the story, the episode becomes an immersive experience

that takes the mirror concept to another level: essentially, *Star Trek* gives the mirror universe its own show. (And be warned: this “show” includes a recurring theme of violence and pain that, while acceptable in its own universe, can be disturbing in ours!)

Lacking the characters and charm of the original series, “Mirror, Darkly” is no “Trials and Tribble-ations”. Taken on its own terms, however, it is an impressive achievement that far exceeds its lone Emmy nomination for “outstanding hairstyling”, and even in an age when fans like Vic Mignogna have built their own *TOS* sets in exact detail, it remains special.

Did you know? While “Relics” and “Trials and Tribble-ations” both feature the bridge of the original Enterprise, they both rely archive footage to do so. (“Relics” includes a few newly made set pieces but uses footage of an empty bridge from “The Mark of Gideon” to avoid having to build the full set. “Trials and Tribble-ations” uses footage of the bridge from “The Trouble with Tribbles” and “Mirror, Mirror”.) *ENT* was able to build a complete Constitution-class bridge by spreading out the cost over two episodes.

“In a Mirror, Darkly (Part II)”: B



In the mirror universe, with the crew takes command of the USS Defiant, a ship from the future.

Air date: April 29, 2005

Teleplay by Mike Sussman

Story by Manny Coto

Directed by Marvin V. Rush

“The Empire could lose this war in a matter weeks if we don't get the Defiant and its weapons to the front lines.” —Archer

With most of the action of “Part II” taking place aboard the *TOS*-style Constitution-class starship (with its new crew raiding its wardrobe and technological toys), *ENT* borrows some more of *TOS* lore for an episode that quickly dispatches with the Tholians to move on to its xenophobic story.

Unlike “Part I”, this conclusion uses an *X-Files*-like storytelling device that *Star Trek* has rarely employed: a meta-diegetic voice in Archer's head. Teleplay writer Sussman, to his credit, uses a scene between Archer and Hoshi to foreshadow Archer's internal struggle as best as possible, but the device still comes across as slightly jarring at first, coming out of left field in the middle of the two-parter. But really, as Part II progresses, it becomes clear that the episode is its own story, being much more unfocused and unpredictable than “Part I”, as well as most other *Star Trek* offerings. (There's even a fight with the Gorn that

doesn't have anything to do with the main plot.) The end result is somewhat polarizing, though two things are certain:

One: "Part II" has plenty of action.

Two: it puts the Ho back in Hoshi.

Beyond that, as a change of pace and visual effects episode, it's quite a head turner, with director Marvin Rush, *Star Trek's* longtime director of photography, deserving special praise for giving the story a unique visual style.

Did you know? During the shooting of this episode, *TOS* guest stars BarBara Luna (Kirk's woman in "Mirror, Mirror") and Bobby Clark (the Gorn in "Arena") stopped by to wish everyone well and give the *TOS* replica sets their seal of approval.

Did you also know? This episode includes Majel Barrett's last contribution to *Star Trek*, with Gene Roddenberry's widow reprising her role as the voice of Starfleet's 23rd century ships. Barrett, who played the first officer of the Enterprise in *TOS's* original pilot at the age of 32, died of leukemia in 2008 at the age of 76.