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Interview: Gregory Zarian Talks Venice Emmy Pre-Nom & Reveals Why He Got Booted From Days



Randee Dawn

About 15 Mins Ago



Image: Gregory Zarian

Actor discusses soaps, Venice and Westworld and reveals a personal experience with his twin.

Gregory Zarian didn't set out to be a soap opera star – actually, soaps found him. And though he's gone on to a modeling career and dozens of appearances on TV shows since his debut role as Brent Anderson on *Days of our Lives* in 1986, Zarian has never strayed too far from soap opera-dom, including his latest role on the web series *Venice*:

The Series – which has landed him a Daytime Emmy pre-nomination. Zarian spent a few minutes with Soaps.com's Randee Dawn to share his classic story of discovery, why his *Venice* storyline has such personal meaning, and the importance of French bread in his life.

Working on Days of our Lives and General Hospital

Soaps.com: Not too many people get “discovered” by Hollywood movers and shakers at their place of work anymore, but you were! Can you share that story?

Gregory Zarian: I was working at a department store as a sales associate in the men's department. This was before anyone knew what a personal shopper was, and I would help people with all their shopping needs. I sent notes to *all* my customers! So this gentleman came in named Thom Racina; he was one of the head writers of *Days of our Lives* and I was helping him. He said, “Are you an actor?” and we befriended each other. I sent him a headshot and the next thing I knew, the beginning of the next year [1986], I was on *Days* as Brent Anderson.

Soaps.com: What was that like? You were still in college, right?

Zarian: I was. It was really exciting! And I was friends with Emma Samms, who played Fallon on *Dynasty* and Holly on *General Hospital*, and I would go to her house and run lines with her. She was awesome and kind, and we've created a dear friendship from all that.



Soaps.com: Alas, the *Days* gig didn't last long; you were out by 1987.

Zarian: The truth is, I wasn't very good! I own it. I was this kid put on a show, and [producer] Shelley Curtis Litvack said to me, "You look good on camera, but you weren't really good." Luckily I went to Europe to model for a couple of years. When people talk about talent on soap operas – you have to be talented to work in this business. I was overwhelmed. I had to be taken away from it to understand and respect it.

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Soaps.com: Of course, you weren't done with soaps; you came back and played Julius on *General Hospital* from 2007-08. What do you remember best about that experience?

Zarian: Oh, it was fearless and free and beautiful back and forth moments. Soap operas are these playgrounds where actors get to experiment and play, and you can see what you can do with character development. The first fan event I went to, there was this sea of women screaming, "Oh, my God, it's Julius!" And when my character was written off, the fans fought to bring me back. There was a line [Julius] said to Sonny [Maurice Bernard] about how, "You think you're something better than a French baguette," and the fans sent loaves of baguettes to ABC to bring me back!

Venice: The Series and Westworld

Soaps.com: Now, your pre-nomination this year is for *Venice: The Series* a web soap that's been around since 2009. You play Nate Pfander on that show; what was your story like this year that earned you that pre-nom?

Zarian: I actually play the twin brother [Nick] of the character I played in Season 5 [Nate]. The reason this character and story is important is that he's being bullied by his boss Holland, played by Orlagh Cassidy, and she was also bullied. We have a full circle moment together, that's why the scene was submitted – it's about confronting your bully, but coming back with love and support. It's about rising up and overcoming horrible people.

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Soaps.com: You've had experience in this area?

Zarian: My [real-life] twin [Lawrence, who had small roles on *Days* and *Santa Barbara* but now works as a lifestyle expert] and I were bullied as kids. We were fat and wore identical clothes and were the last to be picked for the kickball team. We were called horrible names. I'm just grateful I got to do it with him. We went to a high school reunion last fall and the people we thought had been bullying us couldn't have been more kind. Those cool kids – they don't have as much hair as we did, and they gave us hugs and kisses and said, "We're really proud of you." So that's how I handle it. I say to my nephews, go up to the kids that are sitting on the bench by themselves. When someone is last to go out and play, introduce yourself.



Soaps.com: You're also appearing on HBO's *Westworld* as Reed Phillips this season; how does that kind of show compare to working on a web soap that's got a smaller budget?

Zarian: They're both rides at Disneyland. *Westworld*, well, it's the Magic Kingdom where you walk straight on the ride, while with a smaller budget you have to wait in line a little longer, but it's still a thrill ride. It's a dream come true.

Soaps.com: So, do you still shop at your old department store?

Zarian: (Laughs) I *love* that place! It's so funny, there's a guy named Yuri and I'll text him and he'll pull things for me. I've had dressing rooms set up for me in the past. Shopping used to be an experience. Working at that store changed my life.

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