

When The Bear's Uncle Jimmy accidentally came to 'Chicago Med'

Ahead of Season 3 premiere of 'The Bear,' Emmy-nominated actor Oliver Platt talks about navigating roles on two popular Chicago shows

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Decades into his career, Oliver Platt still has something to prove — at least to himself.

That mindset informed his decision to take on another role after several seasons of starring as the beloved Dr. Daniel Charles on "Chicago Med."

"I started to freak out," said the five-time Emmy nominee, now 64. "I never imagined playing the same character for [that long]. I was like, 'I better go to the actor gym and remind myself that I can do something [else].'"

A few years later, the New Yorker is now splitting his time between the medical drama and his recurring role on "The Bear," the FX-made show that returns June 27 for a third season on Hulu. He said navigating between the compassionate psychiatrist and the tough Uncle Jimmy on "The Bear" is both fun and challenging — especially given that both shows film on the same lot at Cinespace Studios Chicago.

There have been times Platt would shoot both shows in the same day. And one time on the set of "Chicago Med," he accidentally summoned Uncle Jimmy.

"I was having a little tiff with my lovely [TV] girlfriend, Liliana," he said. "The scene was a little confrontational, and we were rehearsing, and all of a sudden, the director said, 'Oliver, what's that accent?' ... Thank God somebody

said something. I had to put that fire out pretty quick."

Platt praised the environment on both shows. "Chicago Med" is "deeply familiar," he said, while "The Bear" feels "charged, but relaxed."

His jobs also allow him to spend considerable time in Chicago, where he said he enjoys strolling on the Riverwalk and dining at such restaurants as Duck Duck Goat, Lula Cafe and Monteverde.

He will begin filming the 10th season of "Chicago Med" in July under new showrunners.

"We haven't seen the first script yet," he said. "That's a nail-biter, but also really exciting."

Both of Platt's characters help people, but in very different ways.

"One of the first things that a mental health worker needs to do, especially in an emergency department environment, is quickly establish a relationship with whoever it is that you're trying to help," he said of Dr. Charles. "And that means being direct and empathetic and warm. Whereas Uncle Jimmy almost thrives a little bit on keeping people off balance. One thing that's so much fun about playing the character is you don't know what he's going to do next."

Still, there's a loving side to Uncle Jimmy, aka "Cicero," whom Platt calls a "twisted father figure."

"I think we've learned over time how much he really cares about the people that are running the restaurant, in particular, Carmy, Richie and Sugar," he said. "And I think you start to feel that way



Oliver Platt taps into his empathetic side as a psychiatrist on "Chicago Med." NBC



Oliver Platt appears on two locally made TV series: "The Bear," as Uncle Jimmy (pictured), and "Chicago Med," as Dr. Daniel Charles. FX

about the rest of the staff, too, particularly Sydney, because she becomes a [business] partner of his."

An Emmy nominee last year for his "Bear" role, Platt said viewers might see more interaction between Uncle Jimmy and Sydney (Ayo Edebiri) in Season 3, though

he couldn't give much away.

"I don't want the FX drone to come through my window and inject me with some sort of dangerous serum that's going to make me pass out immediately," he joked.

Reflecting on the first season of "The Bear," Platt said he was impressed by the popular Episode

7, titled "Review," which was filmed in one take.

It's an experience that Platt doesn't envy.

"I have been part of a couple lengthy takes in the third season," he said. "It was like, 'Please don't let me be the person who forgets my line or comes in at the wrong time.' Can you imagine? My greatest fear is always bolting in early."

Platt also praised "Fishes," the sixth episode of Season 2, which featured Jamie Lee Curtis, Bob Odenkirk and other notable guest stars.

"I remember when I first read 'Fishes,' I was like, 'Oh my God, that could very well be the best episode of television I've ever read,'" he said.

That's high praise from Platt, whose career has included stints on "The West Wing," "Fargo" and "The Good Wife."

Platt said he thinks viewers are drawn to the "compelling storytelling" about the bonds formed between the characters as they develop a new restaurant.

"It's about the creation of a family," he said. "It's also about starting to create order out of chaos. ... It's just very soothing and affirming in the most basic human way."