

\* USS MERCIA COMMISSIONED! \* 10 YEARS OF THE USS CÚCHULAIN!\* \*

# THE RUNABOUT

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE NOVEMBER 20

Quarter 1 2024



WHERE IS  
LEGACY?

NEW REGIONAL LOGO  
REVEALED!



STARFLI

The final season is on the way!

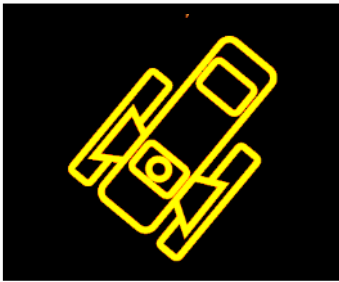
# STAR TREK

## DISCOVERY



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# THE RUNABOUT

## EDITOR'S LOG

**Stardate 280124.7**

Welcome to THE RUNABOUT in 2024!

It feels like an age since our Q4 edition in 2023. That's probably thanks to the festive season and we hope that it went well for you all in R20.

Q1 kicks off with some great articles from our RUNABOUT team covering *Discovery*, the commissioning of the *USS Mercia*, 10 years of the *CúChulain* plus many chapter updates, thoughts on *Legacy* and MUCH, much more in this our longest issue EVER!

We have first nod to the upcoming REGIONAL AWARDS with more details to come on those outside of these pages. What I would say is that it's key to get involved with these and recognise those SFers in R20 whom the region might not know about and those who have performed above and beyond for your chapters and the region as a whole.

PLUS there's the BIG reveal of the new REGION 20 logo as decided by YOU!

And finally—THANK YOU to everyone who has contributed to this issue. We've had more input into this than ANY issue last year. We've been amazed with the quality and depth. AMAZING!

**Cptn Clive Burrell**

**USS Mercia NCC-81891**



# ADMIRALTY BRIEFING

**G**reetings from HQ,

2023 was a great year for Region 20, and although we're only just starting 2024, it has all the makings of an even better year.

Our awards cycle for 2024 (which recognises achievements in 2023) commences soon – every CO has details on how it will work, and how Chapters can nominate, so please ask your CO for details on how you can be involved with the decisions about who wins for your Chapter.

Everyone who has enhanced access to the SFI database is required to complete an annual refresher on the SFI data policy and its application. This is an important part of being able to ensure that your data is kept securely and used appropriately. As I write this, just under 50% of those who are required to take the test have done so.

You'll see that we now have a new Regional Logo!! Congratulations and thanks to LTJG John Styles of the USS Alba. You'll see the new logo being used across the Region in the coming months.

Looking ahead to further in 2024, we will again have a regional stand at the Destination Trek event, taking place in Blackpool this year. I have asked CAPT Clive Burrell to take





point on this, as the CO of the “local” Chapter. Please look out for more information on how you can support the stand in the coming months.

I'll sign off by saying I hope it is warmer when I next write for the Runabout! <<Computer, increase heating by 50%>>

Keep on Trekkin'

**Region 20 Actual, signing off**

**ADM Richard Sams  
Regional Coordinator**



# FLASHBACK

Revisiting episodes from *Star Trek* history

Family

**The Next Generation**

**S4 E2 (1990)**



If I had to name a *Trek* episode that hit me the hardest, it is *Family*. For those who are used to the more serialised approaches of *Deep Space Nine*, *Discovery*, and *Picard*, *TNG* was a syndicated show that, by its nature, had a storytelling approach that one could watch the episodes in any order.

That stopped with the cliffhanger *The Best of Both Worlds, Part 1*. The capture and assimilation of Picard created an infamous summer of anticipation. Would Riker and the *Enterprise* destroy the Borg and Locutus? As the story concluded in part two, there was a moment that told the audience that this was not just a random adventure. In the last few seconds, a “recovered” Picard gets ready to drink his tea – but then a musical chord in the soundtrack strikes. Picard stands up and gazes out in the window, lost in thoughts of ... what, exactly? Credits roll.

We find out what in *Family*, the arguable third instalment in the “Borg” trilogy. A more pensive Picard questions his Starfleet career. The story unfolds, and it





eventually looks like a nice reunion with his brother, sister-in-law, and young nephew will cause Picard to remember his life's meaning. It seems like a nice bow will be tied at the end with some unexpected mud wrestling in the family vineyard, full of released tension and laughter.

But it suddenly turns and Picard ... cries. Cries? He sobs to his brother, "...you don't know. They took everything I was. They used me to kill and to destroy, and I couldn't stop them! I should have been able to stop them! I tried. I tried so hard. But I wasn't strong enough! I wasn't good enough! I should have been able to stop them. I should, I should."

I am in my 40s, sitting here in a coffee shop as I write this, and my eyes are starting to tear up. Picard was my role model (and still is) of how to be a leader and a person, for good and ill, but here he was – vulnerable and in anguish. His brother Robert answers this wail with, "So my brother is a human being after all. This is going to be with you a long time, Jean-Luc. A long time. You have to learn to live with it. You have a simple choice now – live with it below the sea ... or above the clouds with the *Enterprise*."

It was a lesson that, for me at least, that one can choose to live with the hard knocks of the world with the *Enterprise*. And that's why I'm still a Star Trek fan.



The joy of *Family* is that every re-watch allows the audience to feel the power with a different story – Worf's adopted parents' showing their unconditional love and support for their "shamed" child or Wesley discovering a message from his deceased father. It's the power of this episode, and the power of *Star Trek*.

Philip Gilfus





# **& RECOGNISING REPRESENTING**

THE RUNABOUT'S **Michelle Holst** chats to our Regional Awards Chief, **Marie Smith** about this year's awards

**I** am guilty of comparing people in daily life to *Star Trek* characters and this interview brought the mysterious, kind and sagacious Guinan to mind. She ran Ten Forward on *Enterprise-D* and being a guide and sounding board to the crew in countless situations.

Our regions awards are coming up and I have been dying to find out how it all works. Luckily, I didn't have to travel too many lightyears to collect our data. Myself and Capt. Smith bonded previously over a love of baked goods at Christmas time via my first

*Anything But Gag* article. I was delighted but not surprised to hear she was in charge of something so important. I have long suspected that she is part El-Aurian from how well she listens and is, of course the right person to be the Chief of Regional Awards.

Forcing ourselves from the topic of cake and chocolate we chatted for a while about Capt. Smith's responsibilities as Chief of Region 20 awards. It seemed a busy position chairing, recruiting a team, working with R20 Command Team, making sure all processes are carried out and even publicising the Awards.

Through the list of responsibilities she holds, two things radiated from Capt. Smith as I interviewed her. Her unfailing and frankly infectious love of *Star Trek* and by extension SFI and what it stands for and an unquenchable interest in really knowing what great people we have in R20. I scolded her at that point for already answering my next question! It really is about finding the best of Starfleet and genuinely celebrating the positives and the service those people gift their chapters and region. So, we got down to the nitty gritty and what are these R20 Awards. There are two categories – Chapter Awards (position or rank related) and one Open award.

### **Chapter Awards**

#### **FLAG OFFICER OF THE YEAR**

**This award is for officers who hold the rank of Fleet Captain (O-7) or higher.**

#### **COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE YEAR**

**This award is reserved for the Commanding Officer of a Region 20 Chapter.**

#### **EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE YEAR**

**This award is for the Executive Officer of a Region 20 Chapter.**

#### **OFFICER OF THE YEAR**

**This award is for officers who hold the grade of O-1 to O-6 (inclusive).**

#### **ENLISTED MEMBER OF THE YEAR**

**This award is reserved for members who hold the grade of E-3 through E-9.**

#### **JUNIOR MEMBER OF THE YEAR**

**This award is reserved for members 18 years old or younger.**



## NEW MEMBER OF THE YEAR

This award is reserved for members who joined SFI no longer than 12 months ago. All of these awards are for people who have shown exemplary service within their rank or position and expose all the best traits of an SFI member.

### Open Award

#### NEELIX AWARD

**Someone in any chapter who has gone out of their way to cheer, help and make people laugh. An unspoken morale officer who may not always be seen or necessarily have a high rank but who is always there taking care of and lifting people up.**

With all that defined and as though she was listening to my thoughts (still suspect El-Aurian) we got down to the PROCESS!

**Each Chapter is asked to nominate a Rep or Liaison to Capt. Smith to coordinate their chapter's list of award nominees when choosing is completed.**

**Each Chapter is invited to submit one nominee for each Chapter (Rank/Position) award listed above. It is important to nominate people for the correct Category. No one can be nominated for two awards.**

**Please note chapters do not decide the Neelix award, any member of SFI can vote for another member for this award. Just find that persons SCC on the SFI Database and you can vote via a portal that will be sent out at a later date.**

**The submission of nominees of Chapter awards come from the CO but the drafting of the nominations can be done by any member of the Chapter.**

**Each Chapter decides how they will find their nominees. (Voting, Senior Team decides or the CO can decide)**

**This year Capt. Smith asks that not only is a name to be submitted but also a description of why that person should win. It is ESSENTIAL that as much information and detail can be given about the nominee.**

**Each of these descriptions are anonymised and then put to the committee (set up by Capt. Smith) to vote on. The more description, the more highly the nominee can be scored.**

**Based on of the scores someone is chosen for each Chapter Award and via the voting portal the Neelix Award is chosen.**



**Between these winners, one who has scored the most highly will be put forward for the Archer Award and sent to the Fleet Awards.**

I think the most important part that Capt. Smith reiterated throughout our whole discussion was the need to give lots of description for the nominations and reasoning as to why each person is nominated. Spelling and Grammar are not an issue, she stressed to me but she wants to hear people's words and reasons! It is so reassuring to know what passion and care that these awards are being shown and she is listening to what incredible stories there is to tell.

---

# **YOUR REGION NEEDS YOU!**

**DESTINATION TREK is coming to Blackpool in July this year and REGION 20 will be manning their own stand once more!**

**If you would like to be a part of the team that decides how and what we display at this three day event then get in touch NOW via the link below and register for more information.**

**We are looking for SFliers not only to steer the look of our stand but also be part of the team talking to fans across the weekend.**

**[We look forward to hearing from you!!!](#)**



STAR TREK  
**PRODIGY**

STAR TREK  
**STRANGE  
NEW WORLDS**

STAR TREK  
**DISCOVERY**

**What's in store**

**2024**



The BIGGIE, the main event and surely one that will build on 2023's Birmingham takeover.

With some guests already announced, the weekend is just six months away and SFI WILL have a

presence on the day in the form of our very own stand (see also p11!)

Taking place at the Norbreck Hotel, Blackpool, it's not the venue fans might have expected but this "lower key" and more intimate format proved to be a big winner last year.

Also recently announced guests include Connor Trinneer and Cirroc Lofton alongside already announced Robert Duncan McNeill, Tim Russ and Andrew Robinson.

## STAR TREK DISCOVERY

**After what seems like an eternity, *Discovery* is nearly back.**

Encompassing a galactic treasure hunt, the crew are set for their final and greatest adventure. Jack has more on the journey so far on p.32 but whatever you think of the series it will still be a monumental moment in *Star Trek* history to see this show bow out.

It revitalised the franchise on TV (well, streaming) back in 2017 and has at least driven a conversation or two over the last seven years. Featuring a rolodex of captains and the most diverse crew in franchise history, *Discovery* is the reason fans have *Picard*, *Lower Decks*, *Prodigy*, two shows on the way and of course, *Strange New Worlds*.

2024 is therefore tinged with that little bit of sadness for a show destined to keep on running. Absolutely memorable and we'll definitely be watching.





Fly a plane over Los Angeles , attempt the biggest “save” campaign in *Trek* history after *The Original Series* and then sell your show to Netflix. (Ok, they didn’t do the first two themselves but it makes a cool intro!)

All in a day’s work for the team behind *Prodigy* which was unceremoniously dumped by Paramount mid-way through 2023 and with 95% of season two ready to go.

Fans are still waiting on a release date for season two but at least there’s access to the brilliant first season on Netflix as of Christmas Day.

Promising more adventure, more Delta Quadrant, a new *Voyager* and the return of Robert Picardo as the EMH, season two’s lone clip certainly made fans look up and raise an eyebrow. Another ten episodes are on the way in 2024 but there’s no news on a third season with some cryptic “end of an era” style tweets from the producers as they completed the work on the season...



Concluding *Hegemony* on a cliffhanger, season three must only be a short distance away.

Alas no. Due to the SAG-AFTRA strikes in the US, *Strange New Worlds* only went back into production in December 2023 which means that, while it is likely to be a Pike-free 2024 we do know that a new series is on the way.

The New Year will undoubtedly see more snaps from the set and hints at episodes to come. Already fans have been teased with pyrotechnics set to blow up a bridge console and it’s been confirmed that Jess Bush will return as Chapel even though she’s supposed to be off on a scholarship.



# STAR TREK ATTACK WING

Here at The Runabout we can always find an excuse to talk about tabletop gaming (ok, Clive can) and 2024 is no exception.

For a “dead” game, Attack Wing’s resurgence thanks to its faction expansion packs has been great to see. This year there will be at least three new arrivals in the shape of an *Enterprise* Federation pack with all five ships painted gold, a new Independent set and a Delta Quadrant box focusing on *Voyager*’s adventures and including the *Equinox*, the *Raven* (apparently) and the *Delta Flyer*.

Why look at this rather than *Into the Unknown*? Because for the price of the starter set for that (£110!!!) you can buy the Attack Wing starter and a few expansions AND STILL HAVE CHANGE!!!

Now we think that’s a pretty good deal and certainly opens up the options for a lot of gaming opportunities this year.

PLUS there’s the new expansions for *Away Mission* we’ll be covering in Q2 led by Kirk and Scotty!!!



## The big event... possibly!

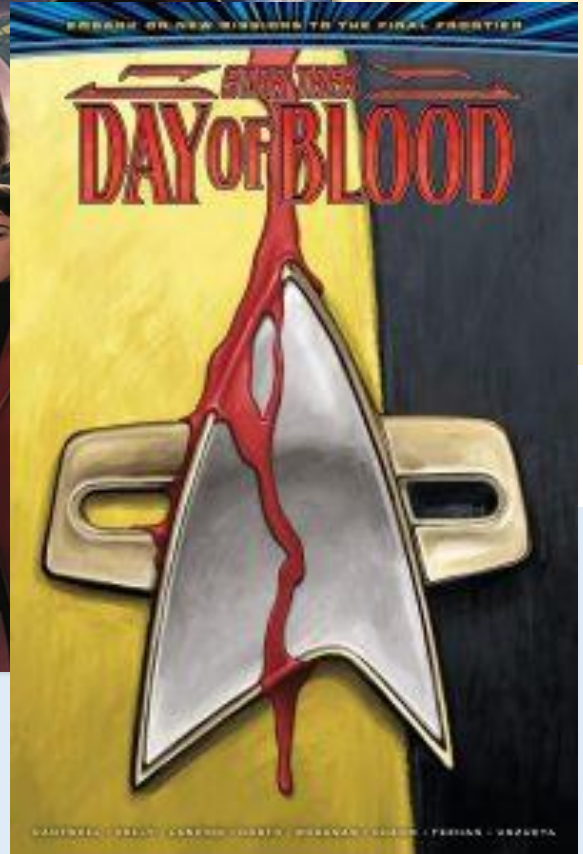
Castings have JUST been announced for *Section 31* so we’ll be looking more closely at that in a roundup next issue. If this one-shot movie is a success though it could lead to more of the same exploring other corners of the *Trek* universe.

PLUS there’s bound to be more info on the upcoming *Academy* series set in the 31st Century one would suspect around the time of *Discovery* and maybe even immediately after...





# GRAPHIC NOVELS



A fantastic year ahead in the comicbook world with several titles already announced and more guaranteed in the works. 2023 was a bumper year for on-the-page *Trek* and 2024 is sticking with the trend seeing the continuation of *Picard* at the Academy, *Defiant* and more.

New to the fold will be the Jake Sisko and Alexander led four-part series *Sons of Star Trek*. This will actually be set after *Day of Blood* and take the sons of Sisko and Worf into an alternative universe where they will encounter other children of *Star Trek* characters. *Sons of Star Trek* launches in March 2024. This looks to be the big release of the year in terms of new material.

In case you missed it, *Strange New Worlds: The Scorpian Run* has just had its fifth and final issue released this January. That series takes place during the finale of the second season of the show.

*Motion Picture: Echoes* and *Day of Blood* will themselves be receiving paperback editions combining all of their issues released in 2023 if you missed them!

## BOOKS



The New Year has more from Simon and Schuster with novels covering every corner of the *Star Trek* universe. From Greg Cox's *Lost to Eternity* taking readers back to *The Original Series*, Dayton Ward's *TNG* era *Pliable Truths* and possibly one of the most anticipated novels of the year—David Mack's *Firewall*.

*Pliable Truths* will see Picard negotiating the withdrawal of the Cardassians from Bajor while also featuring a second plot focusing on Ro Laren uncovering a dangerous Cardassian secret.

*Lost to Eternity* sees a 2024 investigator looking into the disappearance of cetacean expert Gillian Taylor while also uncovering mysteries in Kirk's era of 2268 and on the *Enterprise-A* of 2292.

*Firewall* story will focus on Seven of Nine's journey before *Picard* and is rumoured to include the *Dauntless* from *Prodigy* as a key segment of the story. Set just two years after *Voyager*'s return from the Delta Quadrant, *Firewall* promises to examine the delicate balance of Seven's relationship with Admiral Janeway as she chooses a path with the Fenris Rangers



**Our latest addition to the RUNABOUT team, ANDREW DUNCAN boards the discussion that's on many fans' lips right now**



# WHERE IS LEGACY?

**T**he final episode of the third season of *Star Trek: Picard* was released on Paramount+ on April 20<sup>th</sup> 2023, nine months ago.

An IMDB rating of 9.4 tells the story of how well that finale was received by the fanbase and almost immediately social media was screaming for more with the moniker of *Star Trek: Legacy* trending on Twitter (now X) on multiple occasions for the rest of the year. So, where is it? Whilst members of the cast and crew have been asked repeatedly for months there has been complete silence from Paramount, CBS Studios and Secret Hideout. Considering how popular *Picard* season three has proven to be one would think that green-lighting this project that people are asking for, in a similar manner to *Strange New Worlds*, would be a no-brainer. So, where is it and could there be a bigger reason why it hasn't been announced or even publicly discussed?

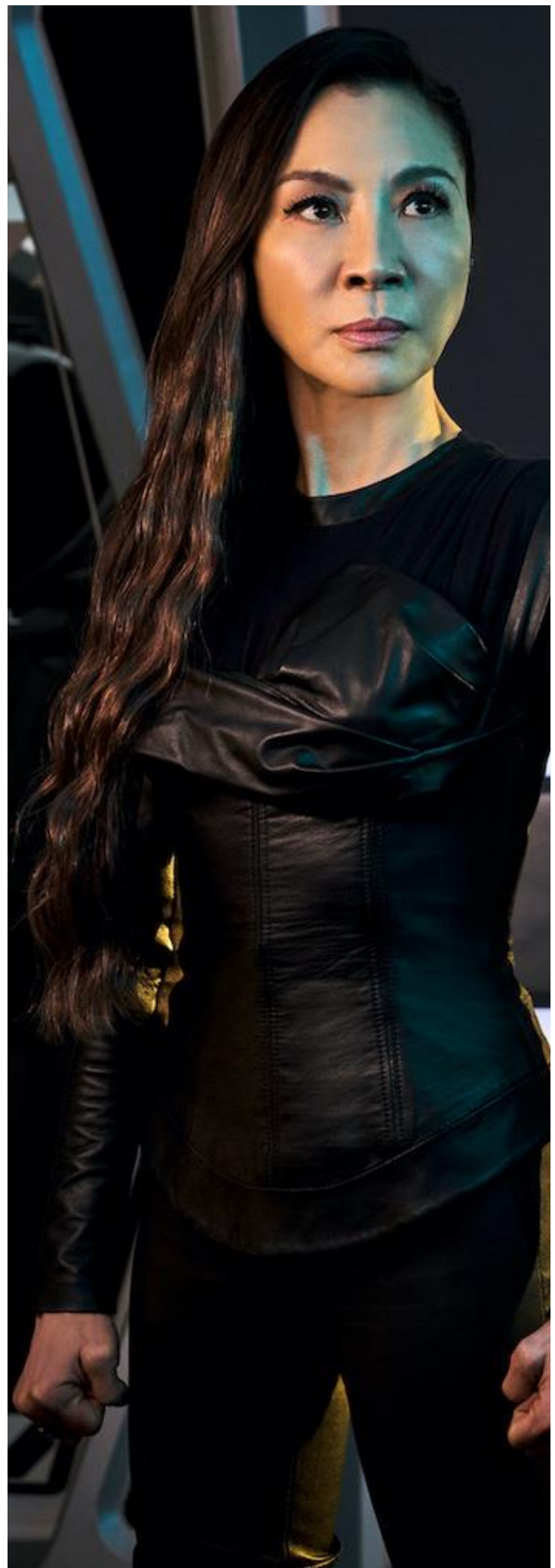
In the three weeks before the finale of *Picard*, Paramount+ green-lit both a new series in

*Star Trek: Starfleet Academy* and a streaming movie in the form of *Star Trek: Section 31*, downgrading it from a series that had been in development hell for some time. Alongside the continuing *Strange New Worlds* and *Lower Decks*, alongside the fifth and final series of *Discovery*, the future of *Star Trek* on Paramount+ seemed very positive, but is it?

Paramount's financial report for 2022 shows that their direct-to-consumer segment (including Paramount+, Pluto TV and other smaller streamers) lost \$1.819 billion. Whilst Paramount's 2023 financial figures have yet to be published, the year saw great disruption in this space in the form of both writers and actors strikes and the realization that streaming has proven to be a financial black hole. The truth is, streaming services across the industry are not making money. Is this a scenario where a new television series with a cost approaching \$100 million can be green-lit, especially when they are already splashing the cash on five projects currently in production?

### ***What about the owners of the Star Trek IP, Paramount, how are they doing?***

It turns out not well. Paramount are the smallest of the large Hollywood production companies with a revenue of around \$30 billion per year. In December, based on their stock price the value of the business was placed at around \$10 billion, although since then their stock price has fallen over 10%. Some brief research shows major issues, Paramount have a negative cash flow, spending more than their revenue, and they are approximately \$17 billion in debt, almost



twice the value of the business. Their credit rating was downgraded in 2023 and currently under review. Paramount are not in a particularly secure financial position and with interest rates rising in most of the world and streaming not the cash cow some expected their immediate future is concerning.



This may explain some of the press reports around the business towards the end of 2023. Paramount's controlling shareholder is National Amusements, headed up by Shari Redstone. Reports are that Mrs. Redstone is looking to offload her ownership, which would be considerably cheaper for an interested party than purchasing

Paramount itself. Production company Skydance Media, producers of films such as *Star Trek: Beyond*, *The Tomorrow War* and *Mission Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One*, are one business interested. However, Skydance only appear interested in the studio itself and would favour selling unwanted portions of Paramount such as Nickelodeon MTV.

Paramount themselves have already been offloading assets such as publishing company Simon & Schuster (long-time publishers of the Star Trek tie-in novels) and have received offers for their BET network that includes TV channels such as VH1. Paramount+ subscribers in the US were shocked to find that the first 10 *Star Trek* movies had been removed on January 1<sup>st</sup> with the streaming rights sold to Amazon. Is this the action of a company attempting to raise funds to pay their debts or streamlining in order to make an acquisition more attractive?

If not an acquisition then maybe a merger?

On Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup> of December it is reported that the CEOs of Paramount and Warner Bros. Discovery had lunch and discussed merging the two businesses. WB Discovery are in a similar worrying position to Paramount in that they are hugely indebted and do

not have a profitable streaming service. (WB's streaming service MAX is not available in the UK as they have an exclusive content agreement with Sky until at least 2025). Whilst







Paramount is the smallest of the major movie studios, WB have the biggest back-catalogue of all of the Hollywood titans and a value three times that of Paramount. WB would likely swallow Paramount in any merger.

But does a merger make sense? Shareholders didn't seem to think so with share prices of both companies dropping the morning after the discussions were revealed. If a merger were to take place the combined business would have the accumulated debts of both businesses and multiple loss-making streaming services to consolidate. This does not appear to be the recipe for a financially successful business.

Is there a world where a merger can be successful? Yes, if the plan is for the WB/Paramount combined business to then be purchased by a bigger fish. Businesses with pockets deep enough to make such a purchase would likely be the likes of Apple, Amazon or Microsoft. Amazon have already purchased MGM Studios, owners of *Stargate*, *Robocop* and distributors of the *James Bond* franchise. Apple have a smaller streaming service that does not need to make a profit for the wider business and is treated more like a vanity project, but lacks the large back catalogue of a major Hollywood Studio. There have been speculative reports that Microsoft have been looking to enter the streaming market for the last few years, an acquisition of a combined WB/Paramount would give them both a back catalogue and a pre-built streaming platform.

Judging whether this is likely would be purely speculation but it does appear that something will happen to both Paramount and WB Discovery in 2024. One thing to note is that when Disney purchased 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox an issue raised by US regulators was the



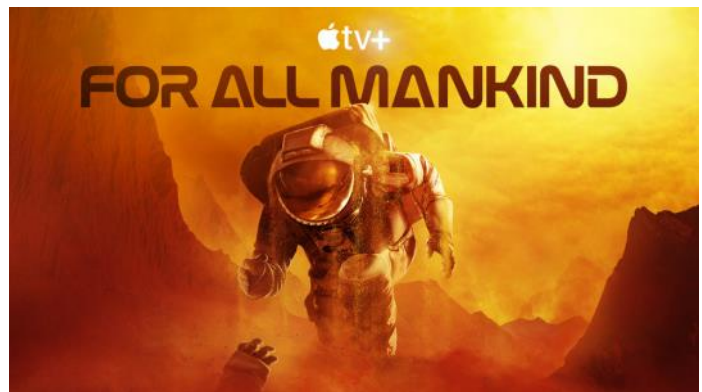
concept of Disney owning two news networks. Both WB and Paramount own major US news outlets in the form of CNN and CBS News. If either entity were to sell or spin-off their news networks an acquisition or merger is likely imminent.

## So what does this mean for *Star Trek*?

The truth is we don't know and everything below is speculative. There are a few options for Paramount. They could remain as they are (with or without a new primary shareholder), be sold off in pieces, be acquired by another company, merge with WB Discovery or something else that has yet to be revealed.

The merger would likely lead to MAX and Paramount+ being combined in the U.S.. What this would mean in the UK is unclear. The leadership team of the new combined business may move Paramount content or license it to one of their competitors. They may even remove themselves from the streaming environment entirely.

The potential for an acquisition down the road may be a very positive outcome as both Amazon and Apple have proven exceptionally capable of creating quality science fiction content in the form of *The Expanse* and *For All Mankind*. Equally it could be that the a parent wants nothing more than MTV. Whether this acquisition includes only Paramount or a combined WB/Paramount would only change the value of the transaction, the potential uncertainty for *Star Trek* would be the same.



Paramount being sold off in pieces could lead to CBS Studios (creator of the current round of television series) being sold, Paramount+ being sold or shut down or the *Star Trek* franchise itself being sold. I find it unlikely that Paramount+ would be sold as an asset, more likely shut down by a new owner wanting to focus on the profit-making parts of the business.

In the event the franchise or CBS Studios were sold this would be a cheaper purchase than the whole of Paramount (or the merged WB/Paramount) and would allow for smaller businesses to look into making a offer. Whilst this may lead to different owners, they may not have the spare cash of an Amazon or Apple that development of a large-

scale *Star Trek* film or television project would require.

Nothing is certain in the future of Paramount. In this environment it seems unlikely that *Star Trek: Legacy* will be announced until this is settled. There may also be concerns regarding the future of *Starfleet Academy* which, although green-lit, still has a lack of clarity surrounding its budget and schedule.

It does appear that 2024 will be a year of change at Paramount and this will have an impact on *Star Trek*. If I could make one recommendation it would be not to get too attached to Paramount+. We have already seen the removal and sale of *Star Trek: Prodigy* to Netflix and the next 12 months may see further changes. The one positive is that Paramount has continued to support physical media and 2024 could be a very important time to ensure that *Star Trek* is on your shelf in the shiny disc format of your choice.

It could also be that nothing happens at all. Hollywood is the home of, shall we say, creative accounting and it could be that Paramount finds a way to continue and thrive. Even as I type these words rumours are starting to circle online regarding development of a script for a new post-*Picard Next Generation* movie.

Whatever the outcome for Paramount *Star Trek* doesn't really belong to them. For years it has belonged to the fans in the same way that a sports team lives beyond it's ownership. So long as we are here *Star Trek* will live on. It has survived multiple cancellations, questionable reboots and all of the current events of the last 57 years, it will likely outlive Paramount, whether in 2024 or beyond. That's the true *Legacy of Star Trek*, whether the series is forthcoming or not.



# YOUR RUNABOUT TEAM



We're coming up to Valentine's Day and we found the best dating profiles out there... who wins your heart this Feb 14th?



OoToTheMax 36 

 Lives In Deep Space Nine

 63 Light Years Away

 Looking For:  
Short-term but long term ok if a Trill

### About Me

If you take the opportunity to swipe right, my instincts tell me it will be profitable for both of us! My ears are as big as my heart and of course my latinum stores. I am a business owner looking for a female who wants to do the business too. So come to Quark, Quark is fun, come right now, don't walk - run!

### Interests

Profit

Paying Customers



BelugaBoy 25 

 Lives In Cetacean Ops

 800 Meters Down!

 Looking For:  
Short-Term Fun

### About Me

Anyone fancy a late night swim because there be whales here! It's mating season in the Arctic Ocean and my echolocation is active. Hope you can hold your breath for at least ten minutes because I dive deep!

### Interests

Swimming

Partying With My Bros





**FillUpMyChalice** 21

Lives In **Betazed**  
From You My Love, Never Far Away

Looking For:  
Long term relationship

**About Me**

Deeply passionate woman interested in meeting a man who wants to enjoy all that life has to offer. Must be comfortable with nudity in public places and an ability to recite Shakespeare is preferred. Want to share all my worldly goods including my sacred rings!

**Interests**

Clothes

PDA's



**LoungeLizard** 48

Lives In **Parnassus Beta**  
17 Light Years Away

Looking For:  
Long-term, but open to short

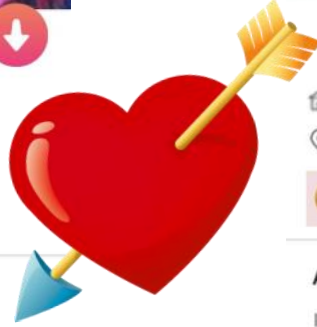
**About Me**

It'll be all in from the beginning. Wanting to start a family wherever things take us even if it's Cestus III. Not for the fainthearted but you'll be bursting with joy in a matter of days I promise!

**Interests**

Camping

Eating Out



Big thanks to MICHELLE HOLST and ANDREW DUNCAN for helping put this together and come up with our selected profiles There are another two over on page 22 and now it's your chance to get involved!

Which of these profiles would have you swiping to get in touch? Which one grabs your interest? It's all just for fun and we'll post the results of our most popular Valentine profile into the Q2 edition.

Follow the link below, tick your selection and maybe even give us some feedback on the RUNABOUT at the same time.

**[MAKE YOUR SELECTION HERE!](#)**





**DotDotDot** 3

Lives In **U.S.S. Discovery-A**  
930 Years Away

Looking For:  
Still Figuring It Out

**About Me**

Artificial life form seeks companion(s) to explore our place in the universe.

Love to travel (through space or time). Don't drink (or eat). Flexible programming. Low maintenance.

**Interests**

Welding    Contemplating Existence



**Alcove Assimilator** 49

Lives In **Cube Designation 476**  
2 Light Years Away

Looking For:  
Multiple Partners

**About Me**

Looking for someone to be in this together. Open relationship as I/we cannot be tied down to one individual. Must be prepared to travel and be up for change. After a short time your shields will be down and resistance will be futile to our charms.

**Interests**

Tourism    Online Gaming



**JustACat** 7

Lives In **New York**  
0 Light Years Away

Looking For:  
Short-Term Fun

**About Me**

Meow! Simply a cat looking for fun. I've been following one man around for far too long, it's time to branch out. Treat me well enough and you might get to see a side of me you don't expect!

**Interests**

Telepathy    Collars



**RepairsRUs** 1,400

Lives In **The Alpha Quadrant**  
Not Many Light Years Away

Looking For:  
Long term relationship

**About Me**

I've been alone for a long time and I'm looking for someone to give part of themselves to me. You'll find me right when you need me and I'll be able to fix everything...

**Interests**

Repairing    Cloning





# 10TH ANNIVERSARY!

## Lt Cmdr Anne T Grace Reporting

**S**o where do you begin to tell the story of the mighty *USS CúChulain* NCC-61922.

Well, from my perspective, my first introduction to this fine ship and its wonderful crew was in Summer 2015, in the Convention Centre at Dublin Comic Con.



I had brought my preteen son to the event as he was hoping to meet one of his heroes Billy West (The voice of Fry – *Futurama*).



As we were browsing around the smorgasbord of wonders that is every con goers delight, I happened to see a banner, a symbol of the greatest franchise in history, in my humble opinion, - *Star Trek*.

I very naturally walked (ok I made a bee line) for the table and was met by an extremely welcoming group of people who were only too happy to discuss all things *Trek* with me.

The first people to greet me were Captain Alan O'Shea and his XO Frank Kiernan and I was instantly put at ease. Alan proceeded to introduce me to a baby-faced head of Security (now our current captain) David Chapman. (He's still baby faced but don't let that fool you,) He is the tour de force, whom we all appreciate as the creator of our wonderful



ship, including its name back in 2013.

The name of our ship *CúChulain* comes from one of Ireland's mythical heroes, who is renowned for his strength and loyalty. These tenets are some of the cornerstones of our ship for the past 10 years and will continue to be into the future.



David Chapman, Betty O'Brien, Alan O'Shea, Pete Meaney and Frank Kiernan having been lifelong *Star Trek* fans living in Dublin, had set up the *USS CúChulain* in response to a lack of a *Star Trek* fan club in the Republic of Ireland.

*L to R: David Chapman, Sharon O'Neill, Frank Kiernan & Alan O'Shea*



They started by joining up with the newly created Dublin ComicCon, which had its first incarnation in Swords in Dublin, before moving to its current venue in the Convention Centre. This relationship has grown and blossomed over the years especially with the creation of our Captain's Chair and ever-expanding bridge set experience by the wonderfully talented Jono and his team.

These were all opportunities to meet and recruit new members and the *USS CúChulain* has rapidly grown into the largest ship in the fleet of Starfleet International.

It's all well and good recruiting new crewmates, but, like a girlfriend when you get one, what do you feed it?

Well, our former Captain (Now Rear Admiral) Alan O'Shea, current Captain

David Chapman, and XO's past & present, Frank Kiernan and Sharon O'Neill, and the Senior

Command Team on the *USS CúChulain* have given so much in the last 10 years including but not limited to the 391<sup>st</sup> Banshees Marine Unit, an airsoft team, a WWI and WWII re-enactors group, three parties a year, culture days, comic cons, bowling and cinema nights, away missions to international conventions and other numerous activities.



Another aspect of the mighty *CúChulain*, is our ability to adapt, in the true spirit of each *Star Trek* incarnation, to reinvent itself to reflect society changes. In March 2020, the world went into lockdown due to a huge panini (the pandemic), but the *CúChulain* rose above and went virtual, with bi-weekly Zoom chats, stream yard workshops and we continued to give crewmates the chance to keep in touch and get to know each other better. To date, QForward, our Virtual Bar, has had 271 zoom chats which have given rise to the Klingon Honour Guard Archers, an annual Quiz League and Lip-sync battles as well as supporting each other through adversity and sad times.

So where to now?.....well in the words of the immortal Roy Batty .... I've seen things you people wouldn't believe and I look forward to seeing where Captain David Chapman, XO Sharon O'Neill, the command crew and the *USS CúChulain* take us next.

Isn't it amazing, how one small step can make a world of difference? (You thought I was going to say it didn't you? ) .

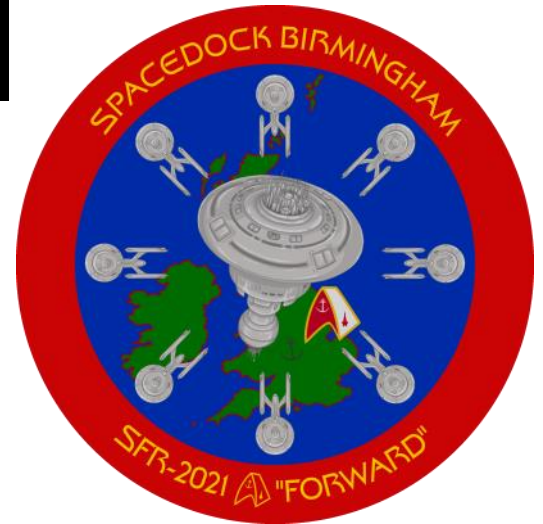
So if you are ready to take that one small step you can contact us at <https://ussCúChulain.ie/> or <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ussCúChulain>



Peace And Long Life.



## FltCptn Sven Harvey reporting



**2023 was always going to be a key year with the pandemic turned endemic and events getting back into their more normal rhythm.**

We are all dealing with more challenges than we were before 2020, and yet the idea

of a positive future from our favourite sci-fi franchise really can help us keep going.

It's my honour to lead Spacedock Birmingham and represent not only our chapter but R20, as a whole, at many events during the year from small local comic cons to LFCC – and then there was August...

We were lucky that the first unofficial *Trek*-focussed from the Destination team was placed at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole by the NEC, a venue I know fairly well. Indeed, there had been a Spacedock Birmingham/R20 SFI presence at TF Nation the weekend before! Even with all the events we were doing in 2023, the main event in 2023 was, of course, Destination Trek where Spacedock Birmingham led the Region 20, SFI table. A display of badges, props, a Playmobile *Enterprise*, a *Voyager* photon torpedo press kit and various other artifacts grabbed attention as did the staff in uniform manning the desk.

A very special thank you to the following people directly helped our presence at the event:

Ann Harvey (Spacedock Birmingham)

Cheryl Nicholson (*USS Merlin*)

Chrissy Passey (Spacedock Birmingham)





*L to R, Gary Roskell, Ruth Winsper, Irene McQuillan (USS CúChulain), Stephen Turner and Chrissy Passey*

Claire Griffiths (Spacedock Birmingham)  
 David Roy Wilton (Spacedock Birmingham)  
 David Zabiela (Spacedock Birmingham)  
 Gary Roskell (Spacedock Birmingham)  
 Irene McQuillan (*USS CúChulain*)  
 Leah Clayton (Spacedock Birmingham)  
 Ruth Winsper (Spacedock Birmingham)  
 Stephen Turner (Spacedock Birmingham)

Many thanks also to the support of:

Jessica Odell (*USS Caroline*)  
 Theresa Bristow (*USS Concorde*)  
 Anthony Raythorn (*USS CúChulain*)  
 Lee Raythorn (*USS CúChulain*)  
 Sharon O'Neill (*USS CúChulain*)  
 Frank Kiernan (*USS CúChulain*)  
*USS Alba* Away Team

*(Continued on page 37)*

**STAR TREK**  
**DISCOVERY**

# SAVE THE LAST DANCE

After seven years, there may be crying at the *Discoteque*

**Jack Kiely**

**N**ot without a sense of irony, *Star Trek* famously killed off the "tee-vee" in what was once the new of 1987.

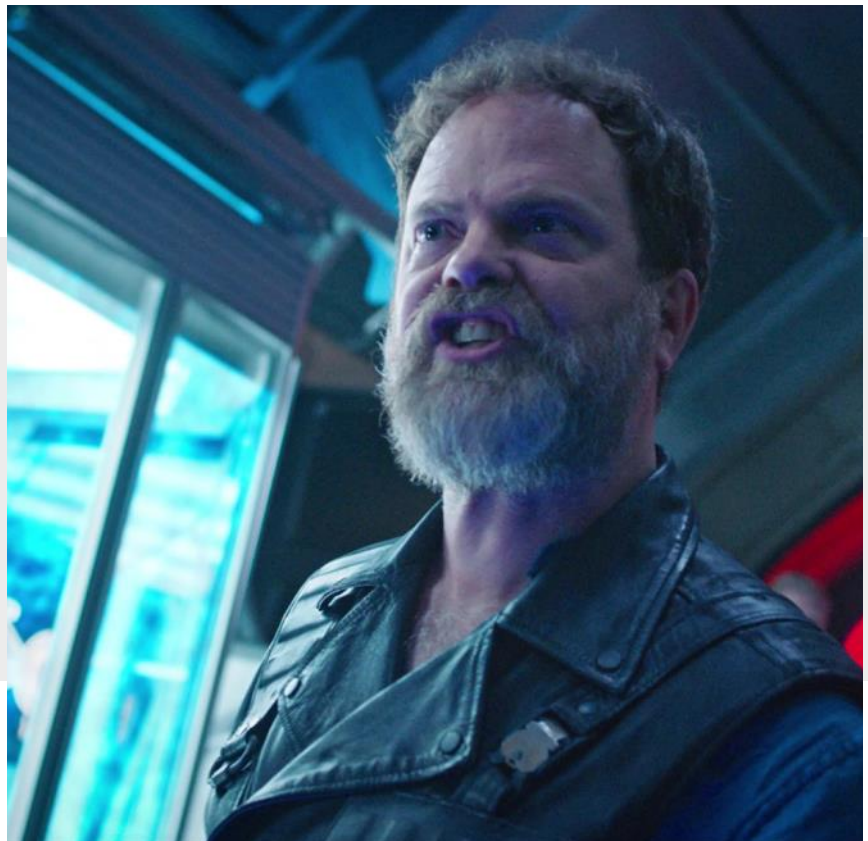
Evidently, this was then the medium by which fans awaited a return after what had become the unjustly old by 2005. The small-screen renaissance that went to *Star Trek: Discovery* in 2017 has been much debated, praised, and far too often maligned. Rather than complaining about it and finding fault at every opportunity, we should really be counting our lucky stars that *Star Trek* is back in the first place, and in such number and variation. Then again, the one that restarted it all deserves more than aphorism too.

As *Star Trek: Discovery* prepares to enter its last season, it is time to break out the box set, and, if you'll follow my lead, the box-step. For this retrospective, I invite you to dance.

## Forward

In one of its abbreviated forms, *Star Trek: Discovery* — proudly displayed as a crewmember or two run the corridors — is both the signifier and the signified. That is to say, and not by the strictest of semiotics, it is both 'disco,' the word, and 'Disco,' if you've got the t-shirt. The self-referential been there, done that (gloriously) is already with the 'Niners' of the Space Station, but the novelty of (The) Disco, doubly italicised, is not that you play ball, but that you dance the dance. The first season episode *Magic to Make the Sanest Man Go Mad* defined this literally, adding 'a disco' to (The) Disco. That is to say, there was an actual disco (party) aboard the *USS Disco(very)*. Beyond signification, this disco dance had significance.

In that episode, Harry Mudd's temporal loops might have matched the music, but it was the atemporal Paul Stamets who disrupted, or queered, the beat. Stamets helped save the ship, but he also bridged the gap between the diegetic and extradiegetic of the disco. Just like the audience, and aside from Mudd, Stamets was the only one who was aware that the music was on repeat, having desperately to convince his fellow crewmembers of the threat at each replay. Furthermore, Stamets' path through, and outside of, the time





loops can be read as a mirror for the queer struggle for acceptance, in particular through the cycle of coming-out that (re-)begins (or not) at every new departure or encounter for a queer person. Moreover, like many queer people, who are often displaced within the arrow-like flow of heteronormativity, Stamets is out and out of time.



As a show, *Discovery* has also bridged time. At first a prequel to *The Original Series*, *Discovery* jumped far enough into the future to escape the reach of Control that it is largely now, in essence, a sequel to all the Star Treks that have ever aired. Whilst it is true that the show has struggled to find its footing in the 32<sup>nd</sup> century, the idea in and of itself is a good one and a fine expansion to the canon, not least in the addition of some pretty extraordinary new technology, new and old alien species, and a dramatic turn-of-events for Starfleet and the Federation. Season two, before the trip forward, was equally strong — so much so that fans rallied to get it its own spin-off, becoming the excellent *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*.

A certain form of time-travel is also needed to reach '...For Me'.

## Side

In 1999, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* was coming to an end, and *Star Trek: Voyager* (my personal favourite) was moving from its fifth to its sixth season. That same year, a new TV program had also begun to air in the UK on Channel 4. It was *Queer as Folk*. Inspiring an American version that began in 2000 and went on to run for five seasons, *Queer as Folk* was truly groundbreaking, nay revolutionary. For the US, it was the first time gay sex (between two men) had ever been shown on television. In an odd reversal, the American version is also the one I watched first, and its effect on me was transformative, helping me figure out and accept my sexuality.



*Save the Last Dance for Me*, a song first recorded by The Drifters, with lyrics written by Jerome Felder aka 'Doc Pomus,' a man who, owing to the polio he had contracted as a child, was unable to dance with his wife at their wedding but knew she would return to his arms at the end of the night, begins to play in

a scene of the last episode of season one of *Queer as Folk USA*. Brian joins Justin, and the pair start to dance as the crowd around them disperses, leaving way for their romance to express itself, ending with a kiss. When the music has stopped, and Brian departs, Justin is 'gay-bashed' (violently assaulted because he is gay by a former classmate). In an instant, things have switched from the euphoria of gay love to the brutal realities of homophobia.

If we complete the loop 20-odd years later, the mechanics of television have moved on somewhat; LGBTQ+ characters are getting more and more of the screentime they deserve. *Star Trek* got its first out and open gay characters in *Discovery*. Finally!! That only took about 50 years (with a nod or two.. ish in the interim)! The series has also opened its arms widely and lovingly to trans and non-binary characters.

No matter how latter day, however, it's all too early for some. Few directly bemoan the inclusion — often under the grumble of "you can't say anything these days" — but there are those who still dance around a discourse of homophobia, their words more subtle, more tactical, couched in convenient neologisms and tied up in caveats the likes of "I

applaud the diversity... but." The tune has changed from overt homophobia to outright heterosexism.

## Together

Soon to air its fifth and final season, *Discovery* will be having what might be called its 'swan song,' or last dance, and by all estimations, it looks like it is set to go out on a high. The season, which begins in April of this year, will centre around the hunt for a mysterious ancient power whose existence has been deliberately hidden for centuries. New baddies L'ak (Elias Toufexis) and Moll (Eve Harlow) (above left) will also be on the tail of the *USS Discovery* in recurring roles. It looks like the Romulans fit in there somewhere fairly prominently too! Plus, when it was decided that the fifth would be the last, new material was filmed to be added to the season, now series, finale in order to give the show a proper send-off.



That *Star Trek: Discovery* has always seemed to divide fans more than any other *Star Trek* series hasn't always been without valid reason. The heavily serialised format, combined with the higher than high stakes (and the less said about the disappointing explanation to the spectacle of the Burn the better) have, at times, made the show a little exhausting to watch. In general, however, there has been enough *Trek* lore from the beginning, and more strictly applied than you remember, to bring us all together. *Discovery* is a thrilling treat for all the senses, made with the minutest of care for detail and love for the franchise. Rarely have we been so spoilt for content!

Some, a minority — to extend the metaphor — are already delighting in dancing on





*Discovery's* grave before its final season has even begun. To those naysayers in particular, it should be reminded that, at the disco, it's always churlish to sit and comment from the corner. If we can't convince you to join us for the last dance, then at least sway along with the music!

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*(Continued from page 31)*

*USS CúChulainn Away Team*

*USS Merlin Away Team*

*USS Reginald Mitchell Away Team*

The event seemed very successful for us, raising awareness of SFI and clubs in general, but also enlisting new members across the region, as well as encouraging those with nothing close by to co-ordinate with us to get another chapter launched, where it's needed.

Onwards and upwards and we look forward to seeing people at 2024 events starting in Worcester mid-February, with *Destination Trek* in Blackpool in July and TF Nation in March and August.

Live long and prosper, 'till all are one.



**Lt (jg) Pam Kingsley reporting**

**T**he *USS Mercia* celebrated her commissioning in November in a flurry of tribbles, cheese, and fair few surprises!

The *Mercia* is officially based in Stoke-on-Trent but has members from as far afield as Cornwall, the Welsh borders and Essex, so the commissioning event was a rare – and very welcome – chance for all the crew to meet up in person, as well as visiting dignitaries FCapt Sven Harvey and Capt David Zabiela from Spacedock Birmingham.

After a certain amount of socialising (and what appeared to be a cross between a snowball fight and a tribble collecting contest among crew children...) it was down to business.

Sven did the honours for the official launch before now-Captain Clive Burrell (aka your amazing Runabout editor) handed out various well-deserved promotions, including to our very surprised XO Captain Marie Smith. We then dropped a surprise of our own with a Cameo video from a plain and simple tailor to the crew, with an added birthday greeting for Clive.

He recovered enough to hand out one more keepsake for the crew. The *USS Mercia* is a *Constitution III* class ship, the same as the *USS Enterprise-G*, and was designed by Bill Krause.



Clive managed to obtain (possibly via a black market deal with Quark) posters of the *Mercia* signed by the designer which were given out as souvenirs of the launch.

The launch also served as the platform to announce the chapter's charity of the year for 2024 – Childhood Cancer Parents Alliance, a charity based in Staffordshire supporting families of children and young people with cancer.

Once the formal part was over, there was time to socialise, surreptitiously sign and hand out birthday cards for the captain, enjoy the huge amount of cheese in the buffet, play pin the nacelle on the ship, find more tribbles (more than one child went to bed cuddling a tribble that night!), eat more cheese, hunt out changelings, be given leftover cheese to take home, and chat.

Leaving the final word to the incomparable Andy Robinson, "I wish you all the best. I wish the *USS Mercia* many, many more years of functioning and doing good things for this world. God knows we need it."

- Videos of the launch and Andy Robinson's Cameo are on the [USS Mercia Facebook page](#).

# STAR TREK — ONLINE — DO YOU PLAY?

Here at THE RUNABOUT we're looking to recruit a specialist *Star Trek Online* reporter to share the happenings of the game on a quarterly basis!

Know your Iconians from the Tzenkethi? Lockboxes from your starbases?

[RUNABOUT@20THFLEET.ORG.UK](mailto:RUNABOUT@20THFLEET.ORG.UK)





STAR TREK

**LOWER DECKS**

**ARCS, ORIONS AND MOOPSIE**

**absolutely adored the fourth season of *Lower Decks*.**

Previous seasons had attempted small scale arcs but in this set of ten episodes the show dropped in a little whiff of anticipation each week before slapping viewers with an almighty reveal at the end of episode nine.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves because even if there wasn't that spectacular finale which *did* live up to the hype, season four of Mike McMahan's animated series firmly moved the show and characters up to a high warp factor of excellence.

The bar was set pretty high from *Twovix* with the return of the *USS Voyager* and a host of Easter Eggs from the seven years of its epic return journey.

Cramming in Dr Chaotica, Michael from Fair Haven, the Clown, a macrovirus, Borg references and every major set used on the show, it ticked every box. The title story almost took a back seat to the nostalgia with the multiple crew splices becoming more and more irreverent as the episode progressed.

But how do you top a *Voyager* episode? How about by creating one of the show's most memorable and instantly merchandisable entities behind Badgley. *I Have No Bones So I Cannot Flee* introduced the Moopsie; coming soon to a Master Replicas website near you.

A fairly straight forward chase story is marked up right away thanks to the cutest and most deadly creature this side of an attack Tribble. Dare we forget to mention the curator of the



menagerie who happens to resemble a banana? Of course we can't!

*In the Cradle of Vexilon* tackled a wonderful old supercomputer trope but spun it to have the unit actually working in tandem with the planet only for Captain Freeman to mess it all up. Vexilon has to be the most polite supercomputer of all time and while the captain's attempt at a full system reboot isn't to plan it does allow Boimler his first attempt at command. The pairing of Brad with the recently added T'Lyn works surprisingly well and provides a balance to Boimler's excitable nature. Indeed, the arrival of the Vulcan previously seen in *Wej Duj* proves that the series can expand not just with the promotion of the four main characters but in the dynamic of its core players. Four seasons in and the arrival of a "fifth Beetle" has only added to the mechanics of the show.



Her inclusion within *Something Borrowed, Something Green* allows for a superbly female-character orientated episode. It's also got the bizarre Mark Twain scenario going on as Boimler and Rutherford attempt to settle into their new relationship as roommates. *Something Borrowed...* does mark the first time viewers have beamed down to the Orion homeworld. The whole female pheromone piece is played up which could have been made more difficult by the inclusion of Boimler and/or Rutherford.

Episode five's Betazoid heavy story draws from *Deep Space Nine* history and Lwaxana's Zanthi fever from *Fascination* but as you come to expect from *Lower Decks*, there's



always a twist and in this case it's surprisingly Vulcan.

Boimler is meanwhile being integrated into Shax's security detail through slam poetry, tarot readings and charades which is not what he expected or desired from time with the chief.



*Parth Ferengi's Heart Place* is a real gem of the season. Returning Max Grodenchik and Chase Masterson to their *DS9* roles of Grand Nagus Rom and Leeta, we have the return of Mariner's associate Quimp. The development of Beckett here is the most she gets this season with substantial inroads made into her psyche and her confusion around promotion. It goes to show that the series can have it's craziness but there's still room for the characters to grow as well.

That said, the brilliantly uncomfortable partnership of Tendi and Rutherford answers a lot of "will they, won't they" questions as they face impossibly romantic moment after impossibly romantic moment during their attempt to navigate the tourist updates for the guide to the Ferengi Homeworld.

Boimler perhaps fairs worse with a whole host of plans to help expand the guide only for him to be holed up in a hotel room watching Ferengi television until forcibly removed.

Freeman's tackling of the Ferengi's entry to the Federation is absolutely on point with *Star Trek* lore and total respect to the writers for making this both hilariously entertaining and



fantastically on the nose.

Now then, *A Few Badgeys More* proved to be an “OH” moment in a lot of ways. Not only were there, as the title suggests, several Badgeys of different ilks but also it crossed off one of the potential antagonists from the list of just who might be responsible for the apparent destruction of numerous ships across the season. Perhaps not the strongest of the Badgey episodes to date, the return of the Damaged Delta was enjoyable as was the pairing of Peanut Hamper and Agimus. That in a way made this feel more an episode with two “A” stories than a main and subplots particularly with the main four cast split into more unusual pairings.





That said, the subsequent *Caves* proved to be a seasonal sleeper hit with the cast trapped below the surface of an alien world recalling past adventures .With each recounting their own tale of claustrophobic goings on, this episode lends more to character depth than straight out laughs, placing each of the main four into situations where they are away from their usual quartet be it pregnant, getting old or just trapped in a turbolift. The episode certainly plays on many a Trek cliché to superb effect and is perhaps one episode that

needs a rewatch to get all the nuances captured. Additional: great to see the Ventaxians again!

The final double-header of *The Inner Fight* and *Old Friends, New Planet* finally answers the season long conundrum as to who and what has been destroying

(actually capturing) alien ships. Not just that but while there's been the focus on that main mystery, Mariner has been facing her own inner demons since the beginning of the season—something that many might have missed.

It's a satisfying end to the season and a year which has definitely been a improvement on the previous 10. That said *they weren't* bad at all but there seems to have been a step up with the promotions and T'Lyn mixing up the formula just enough to keep it the same yet have that smell of spacey freshness as well.





# **RUNABOUT Q2 DEADLINE**

## **Friday 19th April 2024**

**Please ensure all articles are submitted by this date to be considered for publication. This can include reviews, short stories, chapter activities, artworks, poetry... in fact— whatever you feel like!**

**Please be aware that works submitted MAY be held back for publication in future editions**

**Email us**

**[runabout@20thfleet.org.uk](mailto:runabout@20thfleet.org.uk)**

**Want to join the team for Q2? Pop a message to us on email and we'll be sure to get in touch.**

**You can ALSO use this email address to send through your feedback on this or any previous issues of THE RUNABOUT**



# A HEAD FOR FIGURES

With the recent news that Playmates is to discontinue its rebooted *Star Trek* action figures series after just 13 releases, **JAMES PATRIK** takes us back to the heyday of the line and discusses what's made him produce a documentary series to catalogue the history of the extensive range...

**T**o some people, spending an afternoon photographing action figures might seem a curious endeavour – but not me.

This was a daily occurrence several months ago as I began work producing an independent documentary series chronicling the much-loved *Star Trek* action



figure line produced by Playmates Toys between 1992 and 1999.

But why was I the man for the job?

Put simply, I was (and have been) obsessed with Playmates' *Star Trek* toys since I was old enough to pick up a (toy) phaser. My fixation began in 1992 when I, an awkward curly-haired 8-year-old, attended my first *Star Trek* convention. There I found a tiny rendition of Commander William T. Riker, first officer of the *Enterprise-D*.

I can still recall my affection for the miniscule likeness of Jonathan Frakes and my euphoric intoxication as my

prepubescent eyes absorbed the brightly coloured packaging. Whether I stood him up or plugged him into his base, Riker always seemed ready for action. Equipped with a phaser (and fluorescent phaser beam), this single figure set the stage for what would soon become an army of action figures and the habit of a lifetime.

**As I matured, these former playground playthings became collectables, appreciated differently but no less fervently..."**

Like many adult collectors, the Playmates *Star Trek* line found me at precisely the right

age. I was young enough to still be "playing" with action figures, and alive just prior to the tsunami of *Trek* content about to be unleashed in the in the form of *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager*. But it was Playmates' seminal *Next Generation* line that firmly cemented my ardour, issuing the complete crew of the *Enterprise-D* (a sadly bygone trend) in multiple,



season specific uniforms. Additionally,

**“Ostensibly targeted at children, these figures were products that lived and died in retail aisles long before the advent of online shopping.”**

memorable (and obscure) aliens like Mordock the Benzite and Esoqq the Chalnoth were released alongside recurring characters like Guinan, Ro Laren and Barclay.

As I matured, these former playground playthings became collectables, appreciated differently but no less fervently. Years later as an adult, I found myself working in a collectables store which ably facilitated my plastic habit for a number of years. Since then, I’ve hunted down each and every *Star Trek* Playmates figure (and then some) and visited stores around the world in pursuit of my passion.

What is it that makes the Playmates line of *Trek* figures so successful? Much like *Star Trek* itself, it was a toy line that captured lightning in a bottle. Capitalising on the unique moment in



time when *Star Trek* seemed to achieve maximum pop culture saturation, Playmates Toys was the right company at the right time. Putting out hundreds of quality Trek products between 1992 and 1999, Playmates released ships, phasers, communicators, playsets, statues and figures in numerous scales to a hungry and enthusiastic fanbase. It was only in 1996 (with the release of the three infamous “1701 figures”) that fan and collector interest began to wane. In terms of sheer volume of products released, it’s unlikely that any fan alive today will again see as extensive a *Star Trek* toy line in our lifetimes.

Often cited as one of the catalysts for action figure collecting itself, the Playmates line of figures remains widely sought after more than three decades after its inception. Owing to the generational nature of *Trek* fandom, new collectors join the hobby following exposure to the 90’s “Berman-era” spin offs and naturally want action figures of their favourite characters. Approximately four and a half inches tall, Playmates produced 285 action figures from *The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager* as well as the *Original Series* and movies. Other than their superior articulation, it was the true to life portraits of the actors that set Playmates head and shoulders above their contemporaries.

The 90s action figure landscape was markedly different than it is today. Ostensibly targeted at children, these figures were products that lived and died in retail aisles long before the advent of online shopping. Licensed, tie-in products (like action figures) made to coincide with film and TV properties often featured impressionistic (and outright inaccurate)



renditions of the characters they represented. Look no further than Kenner’s line of *Alien* action figures, or the iconic *Jurassic Park* toys a few years later. While those seminal figure lines are

**Playmates produced 285 action figures from *The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager* as well as the *Original Series* and movies**

peerless, artistic liberties were taken when it came to character likeness.

Though verging on caricature at times, the facial sculpts on the *Star Trek* figures bucked that trend and were immediately identifiable as their on-screen counterparts. This

craftmanship can be largely attributed to the sculpting talents of artists like Steve Varner and Scott Hensey. Long before the advent of 3D scanning, Varner and Hensey produced lifelike sculpts of Captains Kirk, Picard, Sisko and Janeway using nothing but wax, resin and their own hands. In this way, Playmates had provided Trekkies with a level of screen accuracy and intricacy hitherto unseen in a licensed toy. This detail-oriented approach appealed to Trekkies who, it can be said, are a fanbase known for their zealous enthusiasm for and intricate familiarity





with *Star Trek* lore.

As another unique selling point, every figure was individually numbered for collectability. This tactic was a gimmick to be sure, but a successful one that meant low numbered figures

**When Playmates' Star Trek line was included in the Netflix series "The Toys That Made Us", the coverage was superlative but tantalisingly brief.**

became highly sought after on the secondary market. Precise details on the exact numbers of figures released remain elusive, but early waves of *Next Generation* figures have been found with numbers in

excess of 300,000. These vast production runs mean that decades later, many of these figures can still be found on the shelves of comic book and collectable stores (and be obtained for a reasonable price).

Even at their most prolific, *Star Trek* toys have never been as popular with children as other mainstream lines such as the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* or *Transformers*. Similarly, as a franchise, *Trek* had never attained the revered pop culture status of *Star Wars*. Consequently, the Playmates *Star Trek* line was well remembered, but not well documented. The recent return of Jean-Luc Picard in his self-titled series, coupled with a renewed affection for 90s culture provided an opportune time in which to tell the Playmates *Star Trek* story.

YouTube was rife with reviews and unboxing videos, but none had yet attempted to chronicle the history of this particular toy



line in documentary format. When Playmates' *Star Trek* line was included in the Netflix series "*The Toys That Made Us*", the coverage was superlative but tantalisingly brief. These factors meant that our production might not only fill a gap in the market but provide future collectors with something of a historical resource.

Given that the majority of this toy line existed in the mists of the "pre-internet" age, conducting research was a challenge akin to post-modern archaeology. Much of the communication between toy companies and consumer in the 90s occurred in print, taking the form of magazines like *Tomart's Action Figure Digest* and *Lee's Action Figure News & Toy Review*. These magazines often featured news, release dates and exclusive images from toy industry trade shows like Toy Fair. Playmates staff like Jim Garber, Mara Hart and Chris Overley featured in articles providing behind the scenes insights on which figures were made and why. Owing to my years working in a collectable store, I had a considerable



supply of these magazines which also housed wonderful, full-page advertisements for *Star Trek* toys.

Many a late night was expended scouring old GeoCities websites (preserved by the Wayback machine) message boards and forums. Of course, part of being a collector is having connections with a

**For the enterprising (no pun intended) community of “customisers”, 285 figures simply wasn’t enough**

grassroots community of like-minded fans who are just as obsessed as you are. To that end, collectors and fans from Australia, Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom assisted generously in filling my knowledge gaps as well as furnishing me with rare and unique images. Of special note are the unpainted prototypes (now the purview of a private collector) which only serve to demonstrate the rich detailing and the intricate sculpt work of the original figures.



After a good deal of trial and error, photography of the figures began in earnest. It was a slow process, vastly more challenging than one would imagine given the relative shine of some of the plastics used and the inability of some figures to stand upright. Determined to provide as comprehensive a story as possible, we resolved to photograph every single figure in the *Star Trek* four-and-a-half-inch range. Having a loose (as in removed from the packaging) copy of every figure in my own personal collection was helpful.

I have always enjoyed displaying my action figures loose. Though considered heresy by some toy collectors, I have separated even the rarest of figures from their packaging (including the infamous *Tapestry* Picard). Once the



photographs had been completed, a script was written that incorporated much of the research I had conducted. This combination of words and images was then sent to editor Darren Maxwell who used his considerable skills to bring our video to life. The final touch was the recording of a voiceover track. In order to differentiate ourselves from videos of a similar format, we elected to use a female voiceover artist. After auditioning a few candidates, it was local artist Natasha Sweetman who lent us her voice, her English brogue bestowing our project with a touch of class.



Our first instalment was released in March of 2023, with a second following in October (a third is planned for 2024). Thus far, the response from fans and casual collectors alike has been overwhelmingly warm. Many fans not only have an emotional connection to these figures, but remember seeing many of the advertisements included as well. The ability to disseminate rare and seldom seen images (especially of prototypes) has been of the greatest pleasure to us. We have learned that the *Star Trek* Playmates community is still vibrant and alive with collectors new and old.

With the Playmates licence lapsing in 1999, many characters from the later seasons of *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager* (not to mention *Enterprise*) never received the action figure treatment. For the enterprising (no pun intended) community of “customisers”, 285 figures simply wasn’t enough. Artists and craftsmen in their own right, customisers use pieces of existing *Star Trek* figures to bring unproduced characters to life. Bespoke figures of Kai Winn, Weyoun, and General Martok satiate the unfulfilled dreams of collectors worldwide. Many of these creations are works of talented artistry encompassing paint, sculpting, and more recently, 3D printing. An essential component of our collector’s community, many of these creators’ work is featured in our documentary.

While they may have been once emblematic of the 90s collector craze, the majority of *Star Trek* Playmates action figures have not retained the exaggerated values that pre-eBay scalpers once claimed. Given the aforementioned large production runs of many of these figures, quite a few of them are still readily available on auction sites like eBay.



Of course, that's not to say that all of the figures are easily findable. Popular characters can still be challenging to obtain. The crew of the *USS Voyager*, as released by Playmates in 1995, remains the only way to obtain plastic likenesses of the wayward crew. Some figures from the later "Warp Factor" waves were intentionally produced in lower quantities (approximately 10,000 per figure) and appear less frequently on the secondary market. As for legitimately limited figures - *Redemption* "Red" Data and Thomas Riker can still command a sizeable price while the three 1701 figures (Picard from *Tapestry*, Tasha Yar from *Yesterday's Enterprise* and Lt. Barclay from *Projections*) can still be found for sale for hundreds of dollars each.

The fact that these *Star Trek* toys still support a community of collectors decades after their demise demonstrates the depth of affection fans have for the Playmates aesthetic. Since 1999, a number of different companies have produced *Star Trek* figures, some of them wonderfully detailed and manufactured using cutting edge technology. While these toys have undoubtedly earned their place in the plastic pantheon, the 90s *Star Trek* Playmates line retains its vibrancy and charm. Much like the shows from which the toys are derived, the *Star Trek* Playmates toy line leaves a handsome and enduring legacy of characters never before (or since) seen in action figure form. To the uninitiated, these are mere toys. But for those of us who love and collect them, they are artefacts of a bygone era, four and a half inch avatars for our fandom, our favourite characters and the enduring warmth of memory.

[YOU CAN SEE THE DOCUMENTARY RIGHT HERE](#)



# HIGH FLYERS



**Sharon Campbell-Shaw** preps for take-off with the *USS CúChulain's* recent away mission

**O**n the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, members of the *USS CúChulain* attended a charity breakfast at Weston Airport raising funds for local St Vincent de Paul charities. This was a wonderful opportunity to support a good cause and see participants of the Bray Airshow and their flying machines in a more relaxed setting.



While each crew member had a wish list of planes or pilots to see or chat to (go Team Raven!) there was one special octogenarian that holds a special place in all our hearts – the Catalina, registration G-PBYA, aka Miss Pick-Up, operated by Plane Sailing.



Catalinas may be better known as flying boats or even amphibious aircraft, remembered fondly as the spy satellites of World War 2. Prized for their great range and durability they were used to patrol the skies and this Catalina was no different. Built by Canadian Vickers at Cartierville, Quebec, and taken on charge by the air force on 27 October 1943, it initially saw service with 9 Squadron (Bomber Reconnaissance) at Bella Bella on the British Columbia coast, looking out for enemy submarines.

With our phones and cameras on maximum zoom we were taking photos of this historic aircraft before we had a private tour.

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**WIRED!** In the days before computers there was a lot more cabling used to control where your plane went

One of the incredible members of “The Cat Pack” shared their knowledge and patiently answered our 101 questions about Cats in general as well as Miss Pick Up’s history.

Catalinas first flew in 1935 and were introduced to US military service a year later.

A little over 4,000 Catalina’s were produced. While the maximum speed was slow, on 193 their range was huge, and it could cover 2,500 miles.

During the war they were normally armed with three 0.30 cal machine





PILE ON! Kidding—it's the interior of the PYLON for the main wing. Originally this would have been the Flight Engineer's position

guns, two in the nose turret and one in ventral hatch at tail. It also had two 0.50 cal machine guns, one in each waist blister. Catalinas could also carry bombs or depth charges and torpedo racks were also available.

The big side blister windows provided better observation out and down to the ocean, a

handy attribute for reconnaissance!

PYB stands for P for Patrol, B for Bomber and Y is the manufacturer's designator.

This Casno was ordered by the Royal Canadian Air Force

It saw service with 9 Squadron and 7 Squadron during WW2

After the war it was transformed to a freighter, flew photographic reconnaissance missions, search-and-rescue and flood relief supply flights.

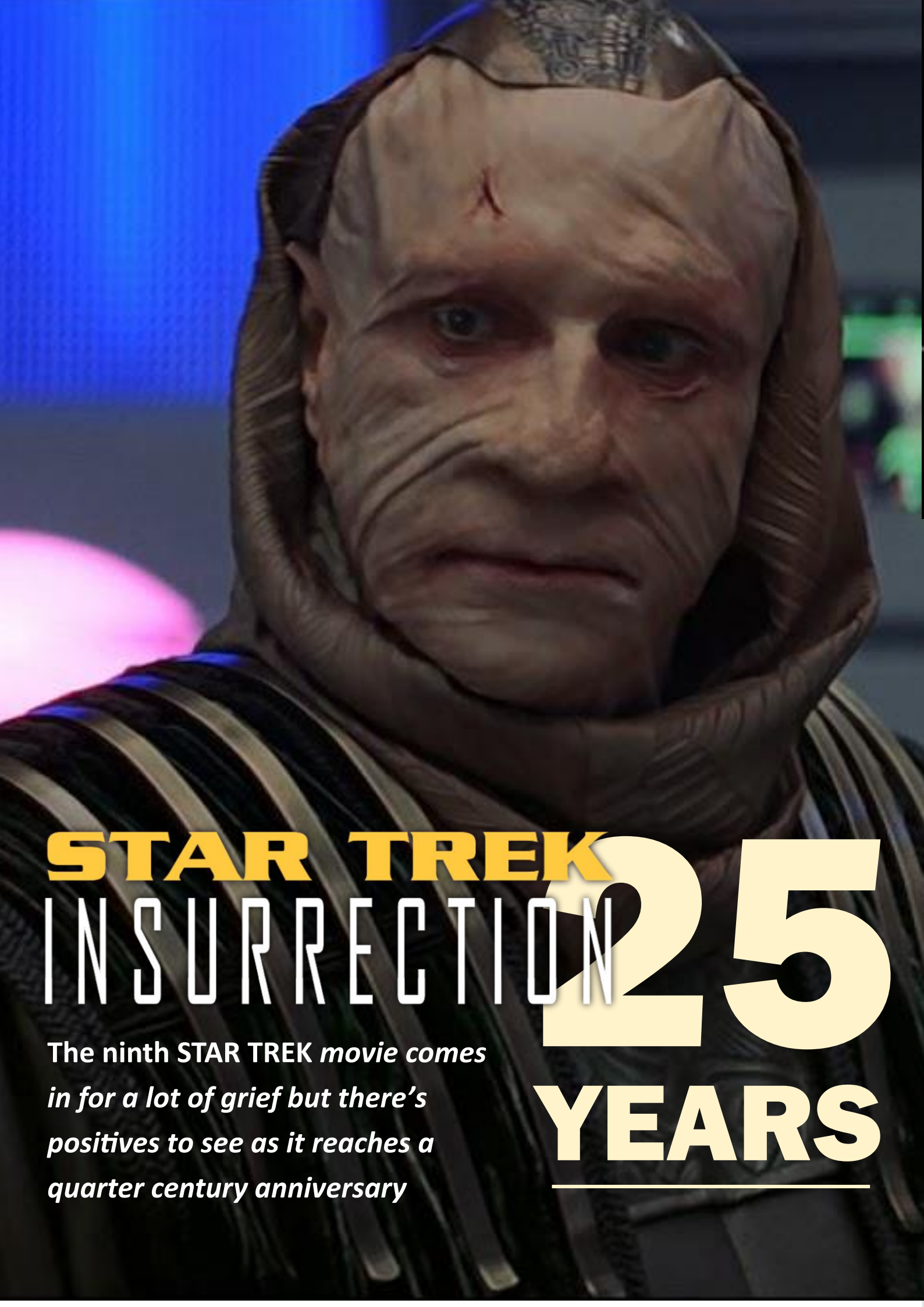
It spent some time based in Marseille with the code name 'Pelican Bleu' fighting forest fires.

Miss Pick-Ups livery has changed several times and the current livery, dating from 2005



(Continued on page 67)





# **STAR TREK** INSURRECTION **25**

*The ninth STAR TREK movie comes in for a lot of grief but there's positives to see as it reaches a quarter century anniversary*

# **YEARS**

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**A**s the title credits on *First Contact* rolled I realised two shocking things. One - that I was coming ever so close to *Nemesis* and second; that I had to go through *Insurrection* to get there.

Now I have to say that it really isn't that bad after all. It's quite a substantial change of pace from its predecessor and yes, it is about the length of a two-parter but it shouldn't be written off that easily. Some of the bad press is for the two reasons I've mentioned there but also it had a lot more involvement from the cast than ever before. Stewart was involved with production and Frakes was back for a second shot at directing. But what criticism would have been levelled at *Insurrection* if it had been all out action again as with *First Contact*? Lack of originality? Copying?

Changing tack and doing something different is one of *Star Trek's* greatest assets and it's been effective in many an episode right across the franchise. *Insurrection* is nothing if not different. Even the opening sequence which plays under the titles and sketches out the idyllic existence of the Baku is a mirror to the events of the previous film. It all seems a lot more chilled out and arty from the outset if I'm honest although it could have done without the cute palmpet thing.

So why should we give *Insurrection* 90 something minutes of our lives again?





While it's not the explosive kick-ass dark cinematic moment that its predecessor managed so effectively it's possibly the *The Next Generation* movie most in line with Roddenberry's *Star Trek* vision. The core of the film is based around the principles of the Prime Directive and how far you should go to ensure those rules are not broken. It's got its action sequences but it also has a very big heart and if *Generations* was a classic Espresso, *First Contact* a bottle of whisky, *Insurrection* would be a milky hot chocolate served by the fireside. It's the most feel-food of the series and also the lightest on the mind. I'm still working on an analogy for *Nemesis* that is printable by the way. Maybe it's that shot of chilli vodka your mate thought was a good thing at the time.

I get a bit fed up with the moaning about *Insurrection* especially seeing as it's been out since 1998. For me the concept did seem a bit twee but there are pockets within the

# STATS

## STAR TREK INSURRECTION

**OPENED: 11TH DECEMBER 1998 (US) 1ST JANUARY 1999 (UK)**

**\$22, 100,000 (OPENING WEEKEND US/CANADA)**

**\$117,800,000 (WORLDWIDE BOX OFFICE)**

**RUNTIME: 98 MINS**

**KEY GUEST STARS:**

**F MURRAY ABRAHAM, DONNA MURPHY, ANTHONY ZERBE**



movie which keep me watching. This time Starfleet are the interlopers; the invaders, nicely mirroring the Borg of *First Contact*. They are the ones observing a peaceful people with Data (as we discover), their saviour. The shuttle chase is certainly unique and nicely done and who could forget the Captain's Yacht making it's only appearance to date even if it is fleeting?

The worry is that while the cast of the first six movies got to chew on Shakespeare, Melville and Masefield, Picard's crew are landed with Gilbert and Sullivan here and Irving Berlin in *Nemesis*. Was anyone really bothered with the franchise by this stage or had they been resigned to the notion of the odd-numbered curse which clearly meant that *Nemesis* would be good whatever happened?

So, yes, it appears they had. An interesting start accompanied by that nifty shuttle chase and Data's recovery set up great possibilities but it never seems that they get delivered on. When the *Enterprise* arrives for instance, the Baku turn out to be nice and peaceful, welcoming those who were behind the duck-blind observation post as guests. However good action sequences can't make up for the fact that the Baku are, well, a shade dull. Even Donna Murphy comes across as a little weary from time to time. The Baku just aren't bothered with anything and their serene lifestyle does start

*(Continued on page 64)*



to come across at times as edged with a little arrogance.

In some respects you can't blame the Sona for leaving and finding something more exciting to do with their time. The whole face-stretching thing is a little uncomfortable but it's one more unique element to the movie and successfully covers the identities of the antagonists until the final act of the story. They are still aiming to remain young in their own way but it's not worked out as well. Ru'afo is as driven a foe as Soran and the Borg Queen before him with F Murray Abraham truly one of the great *Star Trek* guests although his relationship with Anthony Zerbe's Badmiral isn't as fleshed out as it could be. Zerbe seems to be quite a pushover in fact and in the end literally gets pushed over a biobed for an extreme makeover.

So we can see from the sequences and characters mentioned here that there are at least a few things that make *Insurrection* unique among the movies and therefore worthy of at least the occasional rewatch. Maybe it's just worth a third or fourth viewing for a beardless Riker flying the *Enterprise* with a 1980's Atari joystick?! You can't accuse any *Star Trek* before or after this movie of ever pulling a stunt that even came within a ten mile radius of that moment. I still feel that it gets massively underrated for being a little quirky, not just repeating more heavy action sequences and giving the cast something different to deal with. Note: Troi and Crusher are tragically underused even when they do see a piece of the action.

There is clearly a moral message in here about environmental issues, resettlement and the basic principle of being able to differentiate between good and bad. However aside from Frakes perhaps no other cast members should be allowed to touch the franchise in either writing or production areas. Not only does that factor apply here but also to the subsequent *Nemesis* as we will see. Giving more focus on Picard as the all-action hero isn't the best but after *First Contact* who could blame him for wanting a bit more off-ship action (see also *Nemesis* and the *Argo*).

What I do like about *Insurrection* is timing. Being only slightly more than an hour and a half in length it's quite tight on the story with very little "baggage". I love the villains here. F Murray Abraham is just awesome as Ru'afo and spits and hisses through most of the scenes he's in. Putting him opposite Stewart is a masterstroke and does save the movie from mediocrity. The cosmetic techniques that the Sona employ are truly unique if not slightly unsettling when it gets to the point where there can be no further manipulation; "it is green" takes on a whole new meaning after this movie.

The mission to gain the secret of the Baku and resolve their aging really is different but I doubt it would have carried as much clout had there not been such a heavyweight actor underneath the stretching makeup.

(Continued on page 66)

# 3 KEY MOMENTS

## STAR TREK INSURRECTION



### CHASING DATA

*Two great ship designs,  
Gilbert and Sullivan and  
near grass-cutting*

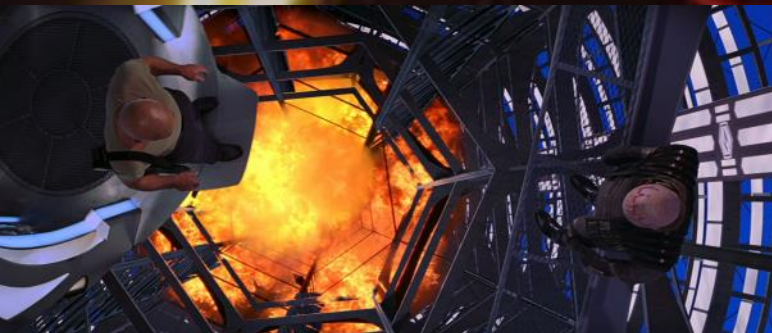
*That moment you realise  
Admiral Dougherty is just  
as implicit in proceedings  
as the Son'a*

### SEND YOUR SHIPS



### ON THE COLLECTOR

*Picard v Ru'afo.  
Unfinished  
bluescreen and big  
explosions*







Adding the element of Admiral Dougherty into the story and thereby Starfleet's complicity within the matter and there's a winning villainous package. Dougherty isn't necessarily evil, just following orders and making a right hash of it. He knows the actions to relocate the Baku is wrong but yet he continues because of the "financial" victory it will bring. The Needs of the One certainly look like they are outweighing the needs of the many here. Ultimately, as said, the admiral pays the price but not before falling further into darkness and agreeing to the destruction of the *Enterprise*.

The CG in this movie is also spectacular. The Sona ships are breathtaking, the *Enterprise* looks glorious even venting clouds of gas from the nacelles. Visually the Briar Patch is a fascinating creation that adds a lot of weight to the vision of the movie yet it's a part that doesn't help make a greater whole.

Where it does fall apart however is the "Picard as Moses" leading the Baku to safety. It is messiah-like in its nature and in some strange way that's perhaps why I like it. It's a rare occasion where *The Next Generation* did the unexpected and went for a mellow approach; there's children, there's families here and even a bit of romance for Picard which counterbalances against the dangers faced by a beard-free Riker and the crew of the *Enterprise* as they attempt to inform Starfleet of Dougherty and the Sona's plans. There's lots of wonderful landscape shots in here as the Baku go....somewhere. To be fair it seems that doing away with Riker's beard may have been a Samson-esque act which meant he didn't get asked back for a third stint which might, in retrospect, have saved *Nemesis* from becoming the car crash moment in *Star Trek* history.

Overall I still enjoy watching *Insurrection* and with its 25th anniversary just passing in December it might even get a special dusting down. I can even manage to stomach all the saccharine moments of stopping time and that CGI slug. Odd-numbered it



was however it'll still be remembered for being better than what was to come along and assist in burying the franchise in 2002.

Saddle up, lock and load your Blu-ray player (or Paramount+) and see the Battle for Paradise begin and end in record time.



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*(Continued from page 59)*

is a replica of her WW2 livery.

It is now based in Duxford after collection from Nanaimo, Vancouver Island on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2004, attends airshows regularly in the summer and a team of dedicated personnel keeps it airworthy.

The more we heard about the Catalina seaplane, its history and shared experiences, the more we realised that this was a piece of living history. We may have arrived with some information and knowledge, but actually sitting in a blister window, listening to the story, was a humbling experience. This aircraft was more than levers, pulleys, instruments and metal casing... it was a protector, a life saver, the promise of a future and a reminder of the past.

Thanks so much to all those at Plain Sailing for their time with us, and for all they do looking after this special old girl. Further information can be found on <https://www.catalina.org.uk/> and there's also a donate button if you wish to contribute towards her upkeep and the great work being done by the team there.

# anything **but** GAGGH

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**with**  
**MICHELLE**  
**HOLST**

Plomeek Soup arguably the most widely mentioned of dishes on Star Trek (apart from Gagh!). Here is

some of the episodes it features in; T'Pol trying to avoid any human food in general and in ENT "Unexpected", Nurse Chapel very much at the wrong time in TOS "Amok Time", with a pinch of basil by Bashir in DS9 "The House of Quark", Plomeek soup or aubergine parmesan in VOY "Nightingale" and SNW in "Tomorrow, tomorrow and tomorrow" suggesting using a toilet as the vessel in which to cook it. That is my list but please email Runabout if I have forgotten an episode!

Mainly mentioned as a Vulcan breakfast soup or broth and seen as red, orange and purple across previous series. However, Plomeek itself is actually a vegetable indigenous to Vulcan and not the soup or the tea itself. It's been fairly difficult to pinpoint an exact recipe. The Star Trek Cookbook (Ethan Phillips, William J. Birnes) and the prop master Alan Sims said he used a celery-based soup with carrot to make it for the set. Interestingly The Star Trek Cookbook from Chelsea Monroe-Cassel

suggests using strawberries, I thought it was always suggested that fruit has a similar effect to alcohol for Vulcan's.

That being said I've developed my own recipe based on the information I found from watching lots of Star Trek and reading recipe books! I think that I would add garlic and paprika but I was trying to keep the soup 'plain' in order to recreate a close to Vulcan breakfast dish as possible. The pictures are not beautiful! However, it was tasty!

## **Shell's Guess at Plomeek Soup**

2 sticks of celery

1 large onion

4 large carrots

1 big spud

2 precooked beetroot

1 stock cube

S and P

Peel and chop all of the vegetables into small pieces.

Put the onions into a pot heated to medium high with some oil of choice and cook till translucent.

Add in the celery and soften. Then add in the spuds, carrots and beetroot pieces and stir periodically for five minutes.

Season well, add in your stock and water to cover. Leave to cook till soft and you can then blend, if you like!





Over this year we will be serialising one of Region 20's very own *Star Trek* stories set during *Deep Space Nine*. Welcome to...



# DOMINION

By Andrew Brannigan

**L**ieutenant, Junior Grade, James (Jim) Kelly stared at the transmission that was currently displayed on the viewscreen in his quarters. In fact the display was on every Starfleet frequency, everywhere.

The Dominion were making sure that as many Federation citizens as possible could see the devastation. They were also transmitting on Klingon and Romulan, and even Ferengi, frequencies just to ensure that the *entire* Alpha-Quadrant knew of the Federation's defeat at the hands of the Dominion.

The Federation's Seventh Fleet, commanded by Admiral Borren D'gret, had engaged the Dominion-Cardassian fleet at Tyra, a system 12 light years *inside* Federation space, in an attempt to halt the Dominion's advance into the Alpha Quadrant. The Federation fleet was greatly out-numbered by the Dominion who attacked with a fleet of 248 ships. Admiral Borren D'gret rallied his force of 112 ships in a valiant, but ultimately, futile attempt to stop them. There had been a fierce, but short lived, battle in which Admiral D'gret's own flagship, the *USS North Star*, having survived the first wave of the assault, was obliterated by multiple torpedo spreads from the lead Cardassian vessel, the *Gevrok*, commanded by Gul Pettar. Thus decapitated, the Seventh Fleet fought a losing battle from the beginning. Although it struggled on valiantly for over an hour, it could not overcome the superior

number of Dominion vessels.

It suffered a bitter defeat. Of its 112 ships that took the field, 98 were either destroyed or so badly damaged that they were unable to retreat from the battlefield, leaving only 14 ships of the Seventh Fleet intact once the order to retreat was given. As they left the system at warp the surviving ships monitored the victorious Dominion fleet destroying the disabled vessels, taking no prisoners. The Federation casualties were listed at over 24,000. The Dominion had taken Tyra.

James shut off the display and sank back on his bunk aboard the Defiant-class *USS Hunter*. Her current patrol assignment, along the Tzenkethi border was just completed, ahead of schedule, and she had just received her new orders. She was to proceed at maximum velocity to *Deep Space 9*.

How in God's name are we going to beat the Dominion when they can do *that* to the Seventh Fleet, almost at will?, he asked himself and he feared that he would never have an answer. He lay his head back down on the pillow and closed his eyes. He tried to sleep but all he saw, in his mind's eye, was the far-off star system that now contained so many destroyed Federation starships and even more dead bodies.

It would be weeks before James could close his eyes and sleep properly but not because he was relaxed. It was because every day that passed brought further casualty reports from the front and more and more of his friends' names were appearing on the constantly updated lists of the dead, injured or missing in action. He was becoming more accustomed to the carnage and war-weary *before* he even saw battle, at least this time round. He had seen battle before when the *Hunter* had assisted in the defence of Earth against invasion by the Borg not too long ago. She was now on her way to battle again. She was to join the Federation's Ninth Fleet based in the Bajoran system at the Federation station *Deep Space 9*.

Based at *Deep Space 9* the *Hunter* was destined to, and indeed did, see a lot of action along the front lines. Her crew would be rewarded, several times, with many medals for bravery and gallantry. Her Chief Medical Officer was also honoured, posthumously, with the Christopher Pike medal for bravery for sacrificing her life to save her patients in Sickbay. She sealed herself off in the corridor that led to Sickbay with a hand-held fire extinguisher and fought a losing battle against a blaze that threatened her patients. When her extinguisher was exhausted she drew her phaser and blasted a hole in the bulkhead, opening the corridor to the vacuum of space. With the air vented into the void the blaze had nothing left to feed on and died just as the emergency forcefield erected over the hull breach. Unfortunately there was nothing that could be done to save Lieutenant Commander McFadden. Her grip on a bulkhead failed her and she was swept out into the merciless void before the emergency forcefields were erected.

## 2

When the Federation Alliance finally decided to go on the offensive and successfully wrested the Chin'Toka system from the hands of the Dominion after defeating the automated orbital weapons platforms, Jem'Hadar Attack Ships and Cardassian Galor-class battle cruisers based there, they began to reinforce the ground their troops had captured. One of the vessels that was left to patrol the system was the *Hunter*. She had a quiet few months there patrolling the border and having the occasional skirmish with a probing Jem'Hadar attack ship. She was then rotated back to *Deep Space 9* for refuelling, re-arming and repairs. There she was once again part of the Federation's Ninth Fleet.

Just as *Deep Space 9's* Chief of Operations, Chief Miles O'Brien's engineering teams had finalised their repairs and the ship was outfitted with a full complement of Quantum torpedoes some disturbing news came in from the front. The Dominion was moving to retake the Chin'Toka system with a massive fleet which included their new allies: the Breen. The counteroffensive was spearheaded by the Breen forces who broke through the Federation Alliance defences in two places. The Ninth Fleet then departed from *Deep Space 9* to reinforce the beleaguered defenders. It was here that the crew of the *USS Hunter* was to taste defeat for the first time.

The Federation Alliance was easily outnumbered by the Dominion's fleet in the Chin'Toka system by at least 3 to 1 but put up a valiant fight in the belief in their ships and their recent successes. That was until the Breen unveiled their secret weapon, their energy dissipators. 311 Federation Alliance ships, including Captain Sisko's vaunted *USS Defiant*, were incapacitated by the Breen energy dissipators, which drained every single system on the ship dry, leaving them powerless and helpless. Their crews were forced to abandon their ships to slowly limp back to Federation territory in cramped escape pods. Their abandoned vessels were then destroyed at the Dominion's leisure.

The *USS Hunter* was luckier than most of the fleet in that she survived the first attack run against the Dominion fleet. Two other Defiant-class ships, the *USS Victory* and *USS Cheyenne*, as well as an Akira-class vessel, the *USS Hornet*, in their attack wing were destroyed on their first pass. The Defiants were destroyed by Cardassian fire while the Akira was obliterated by being rammed by Jem'Hadar attack ship. The *Hunter* had managed to defeat her pursuer, a Cardassian Galor-class battle cruiser. She managed to defeat the Cardassian ship by flying close to her superstructure on a strafing run. The *Hunter* was too close to the Galor for her weapons to get a lock on the diminutive Federation warship. The *Hunter*, meanwhile, was nimble enough to evade the incoming fire while, at the same time, firing several devastating Quantum torpedo volley's which punched through the Cardassian shields and destroyed the ship utterly. As she emerged on the far side of the exploding Galor, the *Hunter* was battered by two Jem'Hadar attack ships. Her weakened shields could not absorb the full fury of the firepower unleashed on her and she was very badly damaged. The Captain, First Officer and two other junior officers were killed by a direct hit



to the bridge. Several others were hurt as consoles exploded across the bridge. Lieutenant James Kelly, the *Hunter's* Tactical Officer, was then forced to assume command being the most senior officer left alive on the bridge.

The young Bajoran helmsman, Ensign Jokana Preal, had managed to use the forced roll put on the ship by the combined Jem'Hadar phaser assault to force the little warship into an extremely tight turn that evaded their pursuers for a few moments, which gave the bridge crew enough time to sort out the chain of command. That done the *Hunter* re-entered the battle and succeeded in taking out two Jem'Hadar ships with devastating fire from her pulse-phaser cannons and a Breen warship with a spread of Quantum torpedoes. Unfortunately with her own shields at 32% they sustained major damage to all major systems as they were caught by the blast wave from the exploding Breen vessel. The blast that engulfed the *Hunter* drained the last of the power from her shields and knocked her weapons off-line. Life support dropped below minimum capability and the multiple alert klaxons blaring throughout the ship did little to help the crew focus on their jobs. And to make matters worse, a Cardassian Hideki-class cruiser was closing on them. Its first volley of torpedoes battered the little starship. Down in Engineering her crew were desperately trying to get Warp power back on-line and all the while the ship was being battered from all sides. The impulse engines were almost gone leaving the ship with docking thrusters only. They were swiftly running out of operational systems, options and time.

"If we're gonna go, why not take some spoonheads with us? Let's ram the bastards!" someone shouted.

"That may not be necessary!" James said evenly. The calmness in his voice not betraying the absolute fear he was feeling. His mind was hinting to him that they did indeed have one more weapon, besides the self-destruct, to use. James accessed his console and smiled evilly when he got the results he hoped for. His conscious brain finally caught on to the idea that was hanging at the edge of his mind.

"Helm, set a ramming course for that cruiser. Best possible speed!"

There was stunned silence on the bridge for a split second. It seemed as though even the alert klaxons had suffered shock at the order.

"Aye sir," she said dejectedly. Ensign Jokana, who as a young Bajoran had expected to have been killed by Cardassians years ago during the Occupation of Bajor but had been lucky enough to have avoided that fate, slowly input the appropriate commands. It looked now though that she *was* destined to die at Cardassian hands. *At least I'll have the satisfaction of taking some of the Spoonheads with me*, she thought morosely, as her finger hovered over the thruster controls. She said a quick prayer to the Prophets to watch over her family as she waited to punch the button that would launch the ship on its suicidal course. She did not realise that her prayer had been said aloud and had been heard by the entire bridge

crew, who were all praying the same thing to their own Gods.

"Course plotted and laid in, sir", she announced with defiance.

"Engage!"

Jabbing her finger into the controls she launched the ship on a suicidal charge directly towards the on-rushing Cardassian warship as fast as her thrusters could force her. Jim counted off the distance in his mind. Just before the collision alarm sounded he gave his orders.

"Helm, all engines full reverse!"

The Ensign was amazed to hear that order. She felt cheated of her fate but complied with the order nonetheless. As soon as the young Ensign started to punch her console, Jim entered commands on the panel in the arm of his chair. As soon as he did, the computer announced the decoupling sequence and began to give a five second countdown. Then, with a thump and at the precise moment of zero inertia, when the ship's momentum began to change from forward to reverse, the warhead was released. The warhead was the entire forward section of the ship, which contained the navigational deflector and the forward torpedo launchers. Since use of the warhead in this manner is considered a last-ditch measure, depriving the ship of its navigational deflector at that point should not cause a problem. In the event that the ship survives an encounter in which it has to use its warhead, it cannot safely go to warp speeds until the warhead is replaced.

Jim was fully aware of this fact, now that his mind had finally grasped the idea, as the warhead burst forward from its housing while the remainder of the ship flew in reverse as fast as she could go. The on-rushing Cardassian warship could do nothing to avoid the rapidly approaching warhead. Its already battered shields crumpled and collapsed beneath the force of the impact and the exploding warhead tore the Cardassian ship to pieces. Ensign Jokana thanked the Prophets for their mercy and Jim quietly gave them a little thank you too. After a quick stock take of their ship's condition the consensus of the bridge crew was to withdraw from the battlefield and hide somewhere until they could contact a Starfleet ship for assistance in making it back to *Deep Space 9*. They were in no shape to fight off a shuttlecraft never mind a warship. Their limited sensors revealed nothing but hulks of damaged and destroyed starships and hundreds of Dominion warships. Jokana expertly piloted the badly wounded little starship into the devastated hulk of what had once been the saucer section of a magnificent Galaxy-class vessel but was now little more than scrap.

She had been decapitated by seemingly unending volleys of torpedoes. The massive damage inflicted, once she had been hit by the Breen energy dissipator, had caused her warp core to breach, destroying the stardrive section, while also ripping open the saucer

killing most of the occupants instantly. The young Ensign had managed to find a large enough gap inside the remnants of the saucer to hold the *Hunter*. Once inside they powered down absolutely everything they could and began the difficult job of repairing their battered little ship, all the while hoping beyond hope that firstly they wouldn't get detected by a passing Dominion ship, secondly that they wouldn't be killed by a stray or lucky shot, and thirdly that when they had restored weapons, shields and engines they would be able to contact a friendly ship to help them home. Their hiding place was buffeted several times by stray shots and the energy wakes of passing vessels as the battle raged on around them but they were not detected and the saucer held intact.

### 3

Repairing a battle-damaged starship is no mean feat. Generally a veritable army of engineers equipped with environment suits, Work Bees and a Starbase or Spacedock are required. However, the crew of the *Hunter* had none of these available to them. They were armed with a small engineering crew, a few damage control teams and every spare hand that was available. That meant that everyone except those in Sickbay or on the bridge, who were conducting their own repairs while watching for signs they'd been detected, were helping the repair effort.

Eight hours after settling into her hiding place the *Hunter* still lay hidden within the saucer of the devastated Galaxy-class ship. Most of her systems had been patched up and the Engineering crews had managed to coax the impulse engines up to half power. Warp velocity was out of the question without their navigational deflector which they had lost when they had dispatched the Cardassian warship when they jettisoned the warhead during, what seemed at the time, a suicidal run.

Sensors had been partially restored and the few passive scans they managed to sneak had revealed a terrifying picture. The Federation Alliance fleet had withdrawn from the system and was limping back to *Deep Space 9* leaving the crew of the *Hunter* effectively stranded. She could move and partially fight at the moment but she could not go to warp speed and crawling at impulse speed back to *DS9* would take years. Years in which they would be vulnerable to Dominion attack because they were now behind enemy lines.

A few hours later the Chief Engineer, Lieutenant Granger, using a bit of ingenuity and a lot of luck, managed to procure some replacement parts for their damaged systems from the damaged saucer they were hiding in. Rather than use the transporter, which could have been detected by the enemy, he and a few volunteers had ventured out into the saucer in environment suits armed with some hand-held cutting torches and wrenches. It was exhausting and time-consuming work but, in the end, their efforts were rewarded when they returned to the ship and managed to get the salvaged equipment installed to find 99% of it compatible and, more importantly, functional.



Within twenty-four hours of going into hiding with minimal systems, the *USS Hunter* had most of her major systems restored to within operational limits. Life support was functioning normally. Engines were ready to be restarted at a moments notice. Shields had been restored to 65% whilst weapons were fully operational but they had to use manual targeting. Full sensors had also been restored and their passive scans had revealed something that, although initially horrific, could prove to be a life-line to the crew of the *Hunter*.

The wreckage of several destroyed Defiant-class vessels littered the battlefield within several hundred kilometres of the *Hunter's* current position. It would mean several Away Teams to inspect the wreckage one by one in the hope that a warhead could be retrieved. This all depended on several things: avoiding the almost inevitable Dominion patrols, which they had been fortunate enough so far to have evaded; finding a ship that had not been hit by a Breen energy dissipator for that warhead would be every bit as useless to them as their own one would have been right at that moment. The final component to the plan was down to prayer and fortune, which so far had been their constant companion.

## ***TO BE CONTINUED...IN Q2'S RUNABOUT***

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# Chapter News

**FCptn Phyllis Seale Foynes  
reporting**



The *USS Liberty Belle* has had a great 2023!

We've had the honour and pleasure of hosting the CS in the summer, had our own Mícheál O'Reilly come home from Slovakia for a party, Cmdr Charlotte Thomas come to Ireland to meet us and see the sights and have had many events through the year.

My personal favourite event was the *Belle-B-Q* at our XO's quarters...we all needed a week to recover..if only for our voices after the karaoke!

I have visited the *USS Appleton* in the U.K. and will be back there in a few days with Cadet Alice again!

Pro tip: The Cake 'Ol in Bradford is a must visit. YUMMY!

We are looking forward to an even better year in 2024 with plans already underway for our Spring Party.

I hope we can continue to forge new friendships through STARFLEET and enjoy the adventures to come.

Wishing you all the very best from all aboard the *USS Liberty Belle* NCC 75033, Dublin, Ireland, R20.



## Cptn Claire Meade reporting



Here aboard the *USS Essex*, we are looking forward to our third year out of Spacedock in 2024, with continuing voyages both online and face-to-face.

We came together in August 2020, as a way to connect people and share our love of all things Trek during lockdown, and with communication very much happening via sub(cyber)space, we recruited members across the UK – from Canvey Island in Essex – hence our name – to Stafford and Wolverhampton and from across the Irish Sea.

With the Quadrant on Lockdown for our early voyages, ships' business involved regular communiques via Facebook – on both our crew and public pages - and meeting via viewscreen(zoom) every week – sharing chat, Trek and other favourites on watch parties with our crew and other ships. As well as completing Academy courses and even testing our knowledge with a Quiz or two.

Since Away Missions have become a possibility once again, alongside our virtual meets, crewmembers have explored regions of space via the Science Museum, engaged with Natural History, felt the Force charting the *Rise of Skywalker*, taken shore leave at Comicons and other events such as Destination Trek, and held gatherings in the spirit of Ten-Forward and Quarks.

While these will continue to be a part of our Chapter Missions, our plan for 2024 is to undertake some new(although not too strange) ones. Some members have stepped it up, and begun the challenge offered by the *USS Mercia*, and we are currently recruiting a new four-legged member to support Assistance Dogs UK as our first Chapter charity. Part of that mission will be to raise funds for the charity, but also support us and the Fleet by to seek out new life(well, new members . . .) and make some products from our Replicators available in the QM store to add to our Combadge. Our open watch-parties are held on Tuesday evenings via Zoom, with crew taking it in turns to choose what we see. Check our public Facebook page for details and to request the joining link. All are welcome. But whether it's in cyberspace, on shore leave, to make first contact or welcome you back on-board, we look forward to seeing you out there.



## Cptn Marie Smith reporting



Hello from the newly commissioned *USS Mercia*!

This last quarter has been so much fun with commissioning the biggest highlight but December and January have not been quiet either as we were challenged by our very own Q in a series of tasks resulting in a hilarious evening of TasQmaster.

On the night, the devilish Q turned up on Twitch looking suspiciously like our very own 2nd officer Nathan Edwards.

There had been 4 rounds: a mug shot, a William Shatner impression, dress as an alien using household products only and create a Trek scene in food. The results were hilarious!

And Nathan, sorry, Q, narrated the show with Greg Davies like patience and raised eyebrows. The amount of work he'd gone into editing the show is unbelievable - he'd even named every single one of our entries with titles like: 'Do I make you Gorny, baby?' and 'The purring ping pong ball'. I won't tell you what he called mine as I don't come off well!

There were joint winners and everyone has agreed that we need to give Q / Nathan the year off to recover from the work he put into the editing.

Heading into 2024 our brilliant CMO, Pam Kingsley has designed a walking challenge from Bozeman, Montana to Starfleet HQ in San Francisco! While we won't be literally doing it, our team will be looking to cover that distance over the next year and more info can be found over on its dedicated [Facebook page](#) or by dropping the [RUNABOUT](#) an email and we can put you in touch if you'd like to take part!



## Cptn Dawn Lennox reporting



### OCTOBER MEETUP

We had a small but warm and friendly meetup with the CO Jessica Odell, XO Dawn Lennox, R20 Crewman of the Year Ed Ashby, and Ensign Gray this month for the CO's birthday. Unfortunately, our usual bar was closed when we got there, but we moved to another dog friendly venue to accommodate Ensign Gray. We had a great afternoon, and Gray made his presence known to a lot of people looking to eat their food, and they were told about the USS Caroline while he entertained them.

PR aside, he was well behaved and rewarded with treats by the members of the Away Team.

### NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES

It's been a relatively quiet month on the USS Caroline. Online participation is still active with Medical Mondays and Science Saturdays, and the inclusion of memes always brings out the best (worst?) in people!

FCapt Odell was invited to be the surprise guest of honour at the USS Alba's 10th Anniversary party. Only the CO and XO knew of their participation, and many of the crew of the Alba were definitely surprised! As the event was a meal in an Orient Express themed dining room (complete with movies as the windows), FCapt Odell dressed properly in a suit and tie, armed with a custom anniversary stamp for the custom tickets they made for the event. Some crew members actually thought FCapt Odell was part of the room experience!



### DECEMBER MEETUP

After putting the date to a vote on our page, the USS Caroline had their Winter Meetup on Saturday 9th December in Lisburn. Mercifully, the weather



was not too cold that day, but the strong wind gave us all a very good incentive to go indoors to keep warm.

Turnout was good, and we all had a fantastic lunch together with a great range of food (for our veggies amongst us), and cold and hot drinks (an Irn Bru Tea was chosen by one member) to try. It was a very interesting afternoon spent with the crew, and it was good to see each other in person and to catch up with how everyone is doing.

All too soon, our time was up, and we slowly departed to make our way home again, giving each other our best wishes for the holidays ahead and to the New Year ahead.





# REVIEWS

**WELCOME TO THE  
DEDICATED REVIEWS  
SECTION OF THE  
RUNABOUT!**

- ◆ *Blue Brixx USS Enterprise-E*
- ◆ *Picard* Blu-ray Season 3
- ◆ *SNW* Blu-ray Season 2

Blue Brixx

# BLOCKING

STAR TREK  
UNIVERSE

# TACTICS

1600 PCS

ANDREW DUNCAN

U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701-E

First Contact

105685

In July 2021 German company BlueBrixx announced that they had acquired a license to produce construction kits based on the Star Trek franchise.

The only drawback is that it would only apply for sale in Germany. As a model spaceship collector since I was four years old, over the past couple of years your reviewer has looked into how practical it would be to get their hands on some of these - Amazon.de will not deliver to the UK, eBay prices are elevated, sales rare, and previous attempts to order direct from BlueBrixx were met with a message that they could not deliver to the UK. However, with the launch of a new set of products shortly before Christmas another check of the BlueBrixx website was met with success. At some point in 2023 it appears BlueBrixx changed their policy, something SFI Region 20 members may now choose to take advantage of, if they have not already!

Now that BlueBrixx will deliver to the UK, which model should I start with? There are 80 models available, mostly ships of three different sizes, but also some small figures known as BrickFigs and 1:1 scale prop weapons and equipment. It was with some trepidation that I chose to order the BlueBrixx Pro *USS Enterprise-E* because it was the cheapest of the large-scale models - a reasonable first purchase.





I was anxious. A friend had recently had a very difficult experience with an eBay purchase from Germany. Would there be a delay in delivery? Would I be hit with a charge for importing? Turns out I did not need to worry. Six days after dispatch DHL delivered a very large box. No delays, no fees. Some further research shows that orders under £135 are not eligible for import

duty, meaning only 7 of BlueBrixx' products would have fees applied (*at the time of writing*). This meant the *Enterprise-E* was good value at around £84 delivered (*accounting for exchange rate at time of purchase*) for 1,596 pieces, especially when compared to recent LEGO kits such as the *Ghost & Phantom II* from *Star Wars: Ahsoka* at £149.99 for 1,394 pieces.

There was only one thing left to do: build the Enterprise.

Upon opening the box you are met with a familiar sight if you are used to constructing LEGO - a visual only instruction manual and multiple individual bags of components. Comparisons to LEGO are easy, but there are some key differences. Bluebrixx pieces do not appear to fit together as tightly as LEGO and the satisfying click that LEGO bricks produce is almost entirely absent. There are also some unique component designs, producing some different methods of achieving a similar result to their Danish counterparts. The instruction manual is easy to follow and as it is entirely visual there are no language issues with the kit being developed in Germany. The only strange choice was that a couple of pieces were found in the wrong numbered bag, meaning there were a couple of occasions with that mild case of panic where a key component could not be found.

Construction went according to plan for the first half of the build, until, upon building the upper decks of the saucer, a single damaged block was found. It looked as if this single piece had been crushed but was missed by whatever quality control BlueBrixx have in place. Luckily this was not required for the overall build, but with no spare found amongst the remaining pieces, a replacement was sought. Replacements for missing or damaged





parts can be ordered from BlueBrixx' website. This process requires identifying the kit and then choosing the missing component from a list. Unfortunately at the time of writing the parts list for the *Enterprise-E* is blank. Contact has been made with BlueBrixx but at the time of writing this has not yet been resolved. The build was completed with one small gap.

The design itself is excellent. The kit an excellent size, larger than expected and dwarfing the *Enterprise-E* produced by Diamond Select Toys. The transparent bricks used for the nacelles are superb and the phaser strips being made from a flexible, curved individual piece is ingenious. Special mention has to be made for the stand. The inclusion of a stand constructed from the same pieces as the model itself is a fantastic decision, something that LEGO could learn from for their Star Wars products. There are some drawbacks in the design. The *Sovereign* class has a very streamlined design and a thin-edged saucer, both features that do not translate perfectly to a construction kit form. The nacelle pylons are also thicker than the design would suggest but this gives the model a solid feeling when handled. BlueBrixx should also be commended for the many examples of custom printing found throughout. The pennants and registries found on the nacelles are a nice detail that could easily have been missed.

Reviewing a toy can turn an experience into a cold and calculated description but building this BlueBrixx kit was unexpectedly emotional. In December 2002 I was 15 and my Dad took me to see *Star Trek: Nemesis* in theatres and to *Star Trek: The Adventure* in Hyde Park the same week. Maybe





it was because I grew up building LEGO and wishing for *Star Trek* designs but building the *Enterprise-E* gave me a similar feeling of excitement.

Overall BlueBrixx come recommended. They offer value for money at a price point lower than an equivalent LEGO product, so long as you are aware that this comes with a few compromises. This review has made a few comparisons between the two construction toy manufacturers, but expecting the same from BlueBrixx as LEGO would be unfair being as they are a significantly smaller company.

Despite the fact my eyes are constantly drawn to the missing piece on the top of the saucer I am very glad to have added this model to my collection. As someone with the painting skills of the average four year old, building models is not a part of this hobby that I can enjoy. This kit has scratched that particular itch and I look forward to adding more of this range to my collection in 2024.





# ESSENTIAL FOR THE EXTRAS

*Neill Stringer*

## **STAR TREK: PICARD SEASON 3**

## **STAR TREK: STRANGE NEW WORLDS SEASON 2**

*Star Trek: Picard's* third season took the series back to a direction that felt more familiar and more satisfying for long time fans of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. After two seasons that were lacklustre for many fans, this season brought back the *TNG* family and give the fans the reunion they had been craving for.

The season took viewers back in a direction that felt more familiar, a season that brought back the characters that the fans had wanted to see ever since the show was announced. Whereas season 2 felt more like Patrick Stewart's vanity project, this season brought back the *Star Trek* elements that the fans wanted. It also provided fans with something they have wanted since *Star Trek: Nemesis*, a more satisfying final adventure with the *TNG* cast.





Jonathan Frakes delivered one of his finest performances with Riker dealing with the grief of the son that he had lost. Todd Stashwick is a wonderful addition as Captain Liam Shaw, a character who starts off as really unlikeable but grows into a character that provides an interesting counterbalance to the regulars, and by the end he has

earned our respect. Like most characters who start off in a confrontational manner and grow into a respectable character who we understand, in the same way as characters such as Edward Jellico.

The character of Raffi, who I was not a fan of in the previous two seasons, worked better by being paired with Worf for a good part of this season. Worf was a lot of fun and his interplay with the rest of the cast was a delight as always.

The villain Vadic was played brilliantly and menacingly by Amanda Plummer, whose father had played General Chang. One of the features is on Amanda Plummer being interviewed about the role. A fact learned from the documentary was the idea of her swivelling around on her chair, was a nod to her father from *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*.

The features are great supplements, we get a in depth look at the season and some of the thinking into the story points. A point brought up was the decision to have Picard and Riker at odds in the third episode and the controversial nature of that decision. As a long term fan of the show, it was hard for me to see them in conflict but after watching the documentary it allowed for a better understanding of why the choice was made.

The stand out feature is the rebuilding of the *Enterprise* D Bridge. For me this is perhaps the most emotional feature. I have always been a fan of the *Enterprise* D and to see this bridge one last time was an amazing moment. Seeing the love that went into this and how they made an effort to get the look and size exactly right, how modern screen were used to create the graphics that were previously done as backlight transparencies.

One fascinating thing I found fascinating in that all the years I have watched *The Next Generation*, I never realise that there was carpet around the viewscreen. It's wonderful still learning new things after all these years.



Also released was the second season of the current fan favourite, *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*. This is the series that has perhaps has come the closest of the current era of Trek to try and capture the spirit of the *Original Series*. Making the episodes stand alone has certainly been an advantage for this series, however I do think the show still has a tendency to use modern millennial dialogue that feels out of place.

There are certain creative choices that I disagree with. I still feel the character of Spock has been neutered on this show. The episode *Charades* is an interesting idea but I am not a fan of human Spock acting like a teenager and having no clue on how to be a Vulcan. It was just full of cringe, however Ethan Peck gave a fun performance. Though who thought two human females teaching Spock how to be Vulcan was funny. Though probably a good example of how sometimes this show understands the externals but sometimes misses the deeper meaning.

An episode I was surprised at was the crossover with *Lower Decks*, and giving us live action version of Boimler and Mariner was a great way to blend in the first crossover between a live action show and an animated one. The episode that I was dreading and it is one I am still I am not enamoured with is the musical episode *Subspace Rhapsody*. This is an episode that was not as bad as I feared but hopefully not one they will do again.



One of the features talks in detail about this episode and despite my feelings on the episode, it's certainly one the actors loved and what Akiva Goldsman had wanted to do. Why do showrunners want to do musical episodes, I mean *Buffy's* musical episode was 20 years ago and that got so overrated also. Seeing the producers, actors and the writers of the song talking about this episode and the work and love that went into it has helped give me a little more appreciation, however, the episode is certainly not going to be in my top ten.

On *Strange New Worlds* there is a feature on the costumes and it's fascinating to see how inspiration has been taken from *TOS* more with this series. I like how they based the dress uniforms on the ones from the *Original Series*. They go into detail about updating the medals from the chest and how it can be added upon to showcase different awards. This is a good example of taking something beloved in the classic and updating it without changing much.

However, it's a well produced season despite some gripes as a lifelong fan.

These two seasons represent two stronger points in an era of *Star Trek* that is very mixed amongst fandom. Bottom line is that *Star Trek: Picard* is the season we have wanted since the show began and *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* despite having a feeling of the New Coke of *Star Trek* is a really engaging attempt to get back to the basics of *Star Trek*.

There are still some features that I need to check out and those are the commentaries. If they are as in depth as the docs then I am sure they will be another great addition. These two sets are definitely worth adding to your collection.



# THE RUNABOUT



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