

COMSTAR

Newsletter of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek Club*

July, 2001



Captain Kirk "figures" large in plans to celebrate *Trek's* 35th anniversary.

Palisades "toys" around with *Star Trek's* 35th anniversary celebration

Whatever happened to all those *Star Trek* action figures and toys?

Well, two years ago, the *Trek* franchise's contract with

Playmates Toys ran out, and Paramount has been in negotiations with toy companies ever since. But the drought is about to end. At least, according to the September 2001 issue of *ToyFare* magazine.

In conjunction with the 35th anniversary of *Star Trek*, Palisades Marketing will release special, limited-edition figures to mark that event. Palisades is known for making fan-favorite figures from *Buffy*, *the Vampire Slayer* and *Final Fantasy*.

Although they are still in the process of designing the new, "six-inch range" figures, company President Mike Horn promises they will "blow the doors off any *Star Trek* toys ever seen before."

For example, the first set being discussed is a two-pack featuring a figure of Captain James T. Kirk in his traditional gold command

shirt and seated in the *Enterprise's* command chair, as well as a 1960s version of *Trek* creator and producer Gene Roddenberry.

When not seated, Kirk will feature extensive articulation (range of movement), including a ball-jointed neck and shoulders, double-jointed knees and specially designed hips. (Watch out, female action figures!) Accessories for Kirk will include a Classic *Trek* phaser and communicator.

Roddenberry will be standing to one side of the *Enterprise* skipper on a bridge deck plate with a hand on the command chair. His clothing will be a V-neck sweater, button-down shirt and slacks, a look discussed by Viacom with Majel Barrett, Roddenberry's wife. The pilot script of *Star Trek*, made of real paper, has been discussed as a possible accessory.

This set is tentatively scheduled to hit stores in early November and will be limited to between 35,000 and 50,000 units. It's expected to retail for under \$20.

Meanwhile, Paramount is negotiating with Palisades and other toy companies about a long-term license for more *Trek* merchandise. An announcement is expected this fall. ■

Let's celebrate July in Ellicott City, Maryland!

The next meeting of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek Club* will be held on Saturday, July 21, at the Ellicott City, Maryland, home of Officer Justine Randt and her family.

We'll gather at 5 p.m. to have a cookout and swim in the family's pool (bring your swimsuit), then begin our business meeting around 8 p.m. We'll discuss the recent Shore Leave convention.

Speaking of Shore Leave 23, congratulations to Chief of Computer Operations John White for taking third place in the *Star Trek* category at the costume call on Saturday night for his portrayal of a Borg Elvis.

Congrats also to Starfleet Intelligence Officer Annie White, who did a great job on her costume as Princess Fiona from the film *Shrek*. ■

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CAPTAIN'S LOG: *DS9*'s "novel"relaunch

Can you believe it's been more than two years since we watched "What You Leave Behind," the final episode of *Deep Space Nine*? Each of us dealt with the end of seven years of top-notch *Trek* in our own way, but I especially remember my brother's comment at the time. "Interesting things will still take place at DS9," Wayne lamented. "We just won't be able to see them."

Well, the folks at Pocket Books have jumped in to keep us up-to-date on what's happening at our favorite space station, and those events are interesting indeed.

Under the guidance of Editor Marco Palmieri, novels are being produced that take place after *DS9*'s small-screen conclusion and add to the rich tapestry of characters and situations the series "left behind."

It's obvious even at first glance that a lot of thought and preparation have gone into the new books. So let's start with *Avatar*, the two-paperback story written by S. D. Perry that was released in May.

Three months after the end of the Dominion War, *Deep Space Nine* and the *Defiant* are in the midst of being both repaired and upgraded when several Jem'Hadar ships suddenly emerge from the wormhole and attack the station, killing hundreds in the process. While Colonel Kira tries to mount a defense from DS9, it falls to Ezri Dax to call upon Jadzia's memories (and new Chief of Operations Nog's technical expertise) to take the barely functional *Defiant* into battle until the enemy vessels are defeated by ... another Jem'Hadar ship, which is also destroyed in the combat.

Meanwhile, Ro Laren, now a member of the Bajoran militia and new head of security on the station, investigates a murder that sends shockwaves from DS9 through Bajor's religious leaders while Kasidy Yates struggles with what it means to carry the Emissary's son alone.

During a quiet meal with Bashir and Nog, the new Andorian science officer (whose nickname is Shar) uses his heightened senses to make a startling discovery: a cloaked

Jem'Hadar who says he's the one who saved the station after being sent by Odo to observe the ways of other beings. In the faraway Badlands, a 100-year-old Starfleet officer named Elias Vaughn discovers a Bajoran orb that sets him on the path to becoming DS9's new first officer. And Jake buys a ship from Quark, then sneaks off into the wormhole.

Avatar is a wonderful combination of old friends and new arrivals that maintains a steady balance of action and introspection while getting the relaunch off to an exciting start. Everyone gets his, her or its moment in the spotlight in two books that set a high standard for future tales to aim for. Rating: ▲▲▲▲.

The next installment in the relaunch came out last month as the *DS9* part of four "generational" novels dealing with the mysterious agency known as Section 31. Written by David Weddle (who helped introduce that undercover organization in the *Deep Space Nine* episode "Inquisition") and Jeffrey Lang, *Abyss* finds Bashir again being recruited to go on a desperate mission, but this one hits a little too close to home. His target is another genetically enhanced human, one who considers himself the new Khan and is about to strike now that the Dominion War has left the Alpha Quadrant in a vulnerable state.

While the continuing storylines begun in *Avatar* are advanced in *Abyss*, the novel concentrates on Julian and Ezri, who's determined not to let the all-too-persuasive new tyrant win over the doctor. Also, Ro and the Jem'Hadar observer must battle a new breed of Jem'Hadar engineered by the new Khan to be loyal only to him.

After enjoying the highs of *Avatar*, I feared that *Abyss* would pale by comparison, but it turned out to be another well-written adventure. Along the way, it introduces a new Section 31 agent named Cole who might just be even meaner than Sloan (!) and provides Bashir with a new ally against his hidden foes. Rating: ▲▲▲▲.

You can get more new *Deep Space Nine* in your local comics shop. "Divided We Fall" is a four-issue mini-series that combines the crews from *Next Gen* and the *DS9* relaunch.

I heartily recommend that you follow *DS9* as it "hits the books!" ■

Captain Randy Hall



Thirishar ch'Thane
("Shar")

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"Star Trek," "Star
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Trek: Deep
Space Nine" and "Star
Trek: Voyager,"
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"starship Enterprise,"
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SCIENCE *TREK*: Out of the oceans and skies

“We could tear down the burlesque house, but we’d be tearing down a piece of ourselves.”
— Homer Simpson

The fact that the Maison Derriere ended up in shambles aside, just because something is possible doesn’t mean it is true (unless you’re talking about quantum physics, but that’s another column). This past month, we left off with the question: Did life on Earth (or our world) come from outer space?

For Earth, we don’t know the answer yet. Certainly it is possible, given that organic chemicals detected in space and on meteorites found on Earth have shown to contain amino acids. But like I said, just because something is possible ...

Considering all rational theories (that is, excluding cranio-cyberonic transaliens from level 42 of subspace), we come up with three possibilities for the origin of life on Earth, our invented world, or another planet: organic elements on the planet, organic elements from space, or pre-existing life from space. Within the last theory is the science-fictional concept that aliens from within this universe seeded—purposely or accidentally—the world with life or the elements thereof.

In studying life in the universe, we only have one example: of course, Earth. And we can only study the origins of terrestrial life by projecting backwards and speculating on what we find today and what we think existed back in those days. The date of the earliest life on Earth keeps getting pushed back as new discoveries and theories arise. Current thinking has the origin of life a billion years (give or take) after the Earth formed and only a few hundred million years after the crust solidified.

There is much debate over the earliest life. One hypothesis is that RNA, that lesser-known co-worker of DNA, formed the core of macro-molecules that evolved into primitive cells. The earliest true life on Earth was prokaryotes—teensy blobs of bacteria with no nucleus. But these little guys ruled the planet for about two billion years. In the end, they were victims of their own success; in creating Earth’s oxygen atmosphere, they doomed themselves to survive only in isolated spots on the planet.

While these early lifeforms grew up under vastly different conditions than we have today,

they are our ancestors. A comparison of genes reveals a number of RNA genes that are, in the words of the origins of life page (http://www.wcresa.k12.mi.us/nasa/origins_life.htm), “highly conserved during evolution.”

About 1.5 billion years ago, a great evolutionary step took place when cells containing a nucleus supplanted those without one (the battle of the haves and the have-nots began long ago). One possibility is that the early cells incorporated some free-floating prebiotic life, organelles such as mitochondria, for instance. The first multicellular life followed about half a billion years later.

But, you may ask, where did these macro-molecules come from? Did they really come together so fast? If so, why the two-billion-year space between the next big leap?

With recent discoveries of more than 90 amino acids in the Murchison meteorite and many organic molecules in outer space, some propose that life originated among the stars and then came to Earth. This “panspermia” theory (don’t laugh) holds that the elements of life are almost everywhere in the universe, just waiting for the right conditions.

Or perhaps life came from much closer, say Mars? We know of more than a dozen examples of bits of Mars on Earth. What if some early, life-bearing Martian meteorite landed on Earth? Of course, the opposite could be true, that primitive life from Earth landed on Mars. Perhaps an early cataclysm like the creation of the moon spewed Earthlings across the solar system.

Life on Earth may emerge on the planet’s surface or beneath. (In the past few years, living things have been found around geothermal vents or inaccessible places miles from the surface.) Perhaps it arrived traveling third-class on a meteoroid. Whether life originated here or elsewhere, as far as we know, all life on Earth operates using DNA and RNA and uses only 20 left-handed amino acids, among other factors.

Just because it is possible that life began here on Earth or that it began in space does not mean it is true. We may never know for certain.

For more information, please set your browsers to http://www.talkorigins.org/origins/geo_timeline.html or <http://www.postmodern.com/~jka/rnaworld/nfrna/nf-rnadefed.html>. ■

Second Officer Phil Margolies

“Where did these macro-molecules come from?”

ART CREDITS:
stinsv.com 1
psiphi.org 2
W&R Graphics 4
Dynamic Graphics
5, insert front,
insert back

REFLECTIONS: While we were so rudely interrupted ...

This past weekend, I was riding the Metro, on my way to meet the guys at one of our favorite places to dine, when I noticed a gentleman looking at me. Now, I get that a lot—people looking at me as if I’m insane—but this guy looked pleased. At first, I was afraid he was going to ask me out on a date (I get that a lot.), but I suddenly noticed what he was looking at: my *Deep Space Nine* T-shirt. He said to me, and I quote: “Excuse me, but I honestly believe that was the greatest show ever produced.” We talked for an hour and a half.

*“The Ascent” by Ira Steven Behr/
Robert Hewitt Wolfe*

Odo is beside himself with glee as he transports Quark to a Federation court to be tried as a criminal. En route, the runabout is booby-trapped, and they are forced to crash land on a nearby planet with no rations, no heat and no hope for survival.

This is another one of those outings that looks much better after the second viewing. Odo and Quark not only provide plenty of laughs, but also a brief peek at their true feelings and mutual respect for one another. The sub-plot of Nog returning from Starfleet Academy and rooming with Jake was equally as pleasing. The eventual falling out they have is refreshing once one realizes how they have actually interchanged personalities. Jake used to be the perfect kid, a model of good parenting, while Nog was a little hoodlum. Now Jake is the unprecedented slob, and Nog is the model of efficiency. This is a brilliant take on total role reversal that took years to achieve—not only does it greatly enhance the characters, but it also makes total sense in the characters’ evolution. Rating: ▲▲▲.

“Rapture,” story by L. J. Strom, teleplay by Hans Beimler

Sisko is beside himself after he’s told that Bajor has been accepted into the Federation. He is more beside himself after finding the lost Bajoran city of B’hala, and he becomes even *more* beside himself once a holosuite accident leaves him with neural trauma. After using the

Orb of Prophecy, Sisko experiences headaches, resulting in mild telepathy and clairvoyance.

After these events, Sisko correctly foretells the war with the Dominion, the coming invasion and Cardassia’s allegiance with the Dominion. This is the beginning of not only the captain embracing his given title of “emissary,” but Kai Winn as well. There are some intense moments here; Winn puts Kira in her place with HER occupation memories, Sisko is literally dying but refuses to give up the visions that are threatening his life; and, though we

didn’t know it at the time, there’s a changeling on the station, and he’s operating on Sisko! This was also the episode that introduced the new uniforms to *DS9*. Rating:

▲▲▲.

*“The Darkness and the Light,” story by Bryan Fuller,
teleplay by Ronald D. Moore*

One by one, Kira’s resistance cell members are being killed. It doesn’t take long before she realizes that she may be next.

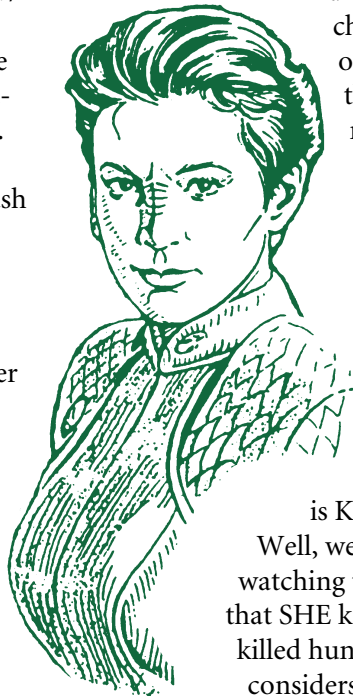
Kira’s an idiot. Not only is Kira an idiot, she’s a murderer.

Well, we knew that already, but after watching this episode, I was not so sure that SHE knew it. She and her friends killed hundreds of Cardassians, yet she considers her friends innocents. All feelings of Kira evolving into a rational being are thrown right out the window as she not only endangers the O’Briens’ unborn child, but also risks the entire station while trying to enter her quarters after a plasma bomb explosion.

I find myself feeling more for her enemy, Silaran, than I do for her as she is in total denial of her role in harming this innocent or even admitting that he was innocent when he was disfigured by her explosives. She still feels that ALL Cardassians were guilty, even this one, who was no more than a servant on Bajor when he was attacked. Kira’s denial, the Cardassian’s blind thirst for revenge and the Internet fans’ continuous debate over the episode’s merits. It wouldn’t be the last time these happened.

Great episode. Rating: ▲▲▲▲-½. ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard



RANTINGS: Where no one has gone before???

I was watching the *Star Trek* episode “A Piece of the Action” on DVD. In the teaser, Kirk and Spock talk about the *U.S.S. Horizon* visiting the planet “a hundred years ago.” They also mention that this was “before the non-interference directive went into effect.” Now, can’t you just imagine a captain with “a bold personality” imposing his will on every planet he visits? These people are going to

make the galaxy over in their own weird image as Rick Berman and Brannon Braga are doing with the entire *Trek* franchise. As just about everyone knows by now unless you have been living under a rock, *Enterprise* will be the next chapter in the *Star Trek* saga.

Scott Bakula will star as Captain Jonathan Archer of the *S.S. Enterprise*. Berman and Braga are going to present tales of the “Dawn of the Federation” to “bridge the gap between today’s world and the original *Star Trek* series,” according to a Paramount

publicity packet. Well, *lah-de-freakin’-dah*.

I have read as much information as I could find on *Enterprise*. Ya know what I discovered? Surprise, surprise! These guys have absolutely NO creativity and NO imagination. None. Zip. Bupkus. Nada. **This** is the best idea they could come up with after two years of teasing the fans to expect a “bold, new, fresh and innovative concept?” I would not be so upset if Vermin and Braggart were ripping off themselves or Gene, God rest his soul. But they aren’t doing that. They are ripping off the people who ripped off Gene. From the sounds of things, they combined ideas from *Babylon 5*, *Andromeda* and a couple of other shows to put it under the *Star Trek* banner. ONLY they are not calling it “Star Trek.” That right there tells me the idea is so putrid that Gene would turn over in his grave if they did. However, they say that any “real” fan should associate “Enterprise” with *Trek*.

It seems that they took *Andromeda*’s premise of trying to “re-establish the Systems Commonwealth” and twisted it inside out so

that the series “focuses on the history of the galactic upheaval that led to the Federation.” There are other similarities between *Andromeda*, *B5* and this series. The most striking one is “White Male Captain” and “White Female First Officer.” The show features Bakula as Captain Jonathan Archer and Jolene Blalock as Subcommander T’Pol or whatever the hell her name is this week. (For those who still do not see it, let me spell it out: Sheridan/Ivanova, Hunt/Valentine or John Crichton/Aeryn Sun.) Who knows what other characters will be appropriated? Paul Atradies? Da’an? Scorpius? Why not Lieutenant Commander Kal-El, for that matter? No. They would not use that last one; he is on another network. They can also use the “will they/won’t they kiss” tension for when they have totally run out of ideas.

Even the uniforms are a rip-off of *B5*’s Earthgov uniforms. The word is that T’Pol’s uniform will make “Seven of Nine’s catsuit look like a moo-moo.” Yeah, I’m guessing her ears will not be the ONLY things that are pointed. Looks like the geeks in the basement of the science building will get a new poster babe. I have to wonder what this “new” *Enterprise* will be a copy of? The *Nostramo* from *Alien*? The *Discovery*? How about Lone-star’s ship from *Spaceballs*?

It is an accepted axiom that there are no new ideas in Hollywood, but even JMS should be able to see through this one. It has also been stated that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, although WHY they would want to take any ideas from crap like BS, er *B5*, is beyond me; maybe the similarities with *Andromeda* will improve the situation. Now, I am sure that some people are reading this and asking, “How can you judge a series before you have seen one minute of it?” That is a valid point. In the words of Tim McVeigh, “It’s all in the execution.” I do hope that this series will be something that we can watch and not be embarrassed. But if history is any teacher, it does not look promising. How many series have we seen that seemed like a good idea but ended up stinking worse than New Jersey on a hot August day solely because some element was screwed up?

“Hopeless and helpless doth Aegeon wend, but to procrastinate his lifeless end.” ■

Officer Peter Chewning



COMING EVENTS

JULY

July 21 Discuss Shore Leave 23 at our July club meeting! We'll get together and see how things went! For directions, see the insert that is included with this newsletter!

AUGUST

August 18 Time once again for the club's annual Olympics! As usual, we'll be meeting at the Gaithersburg, Maryland, home of the parents of First Officer Abby Lindstrom. Come and enjoy the fun games we can participate in during this summer special event. Mark your calendar now! More information will be in the newsletter next month.

SEPTEMBER

September 15 Don't "fall" behind! Come to our September meeting as we get ready for the debut of the fifth *Trek* incarnation, *Enterprise*. We'll make plans to get together for the two-hour premiere, expected to take place on Wednesday, September 26. Let's enjoy ourselves as we follow *Star Trek* where it has never gone before!

OCTOBER

October 20 What was *Star Trek's* latest *Enterprise* like? What was good, what could be improved? Let's talk about it during our October club meeting. Keep your eyes open for more details as they become available!

NOVEMBER

November 17 Is anyone else thankful it is November? Well, this is our chance to enjoy some holiday food as we gather together in the closing months of 2001. Watch for more information about this meeting as we get closer to it!

Phasers on FUN!

Answer *Next Generation* Trivia!

Adapted from a submission on America Online.

1. Who said the following and in what episode? "My advice is ... ask somebody else for advice—at least, someone who's got experience giving advice."
2. What shuttle maneuver, apparently not condoned by Starfleet Academy, did both Chief Engineer LaForge and Captain Jellico enjoy?
3. In the future timeline of "All Good Things," what pest does Geordi tell Picard he has on his grapevines?
4. In which *Next Gen* episode is it revealed that only 19 percent of the galaxy has been charted?
5. According to Eli Hollanger in "A Fistful of Datas," Counselor "Durango" Troi is good with which brand of rifle?
6. In *Star Trek: First Contact*, what composer's music is Captain Picard listening to in his Ready Room when Riker walks in?

Answers:
1. Lieutenant Geordi LaForge "In Theory" Part II
2. The Titan's Turn, "Chain of Command"
3. Leaf miners
4. "The Dauphin"
5. Winchester
6. Hector Berlioz

CLUB BIRTHDAY:
Chief Medical Officer
Stephannie Baldau on
Sunday, July 29