

COMSTAR

Publication of the U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek and Science-Fiction Club

May, 2005



What's next for *Star Trek?* Look to the movie theater!

Now that the finale for *Star Trek: Enterprise* has aired, what will happen to the long-lived Paramount franchise?

While no official plans have been made for a return to television, a script is being developed for *Trek* to return to a movie theater near you.

In a recent interview at *syfyportal.com*, Erik Jendresen, who has been commissioned by Paramount to write the 11th *Trek* film, plans on introducing a new slate of characters and a new cast. But that's just the beginning.

"I can certainly say that the story concept, the basic idea of this thing, is pretty big," Jendresen said. "It's a noble enterprise, pun intended."

Jendresen, probably best known for his Emmy award-winning work as a producer and lead writer for HBO's *Band of Brothers*, was approached by Paramount and asked, "What if we could approach this as a blank slate, and here's a notion. When I heard the notion, I realized that the people I was talking to were serious and genuinely dedicated," he said. "I started to really think about it and to develop a story. And it's a pretty good one."

Reports of the next movie have it taking place after the events of *Star Trek: Enterprise* and before the adventures of James Kirk in Classic *Trek*. Jendresen confirmed that the

movie would take place before Kirk, but acknowledged that it would not be an *Enterprise* spinoff.

"We're going roughly 80 years before Kirk. It's an earlier time, and I think it would be really refreshing to feel something in the course of telling this tale, instead of being wowed by special effects, or presenting another crew in jeopardy where, in the end, the captain does something brilliant, and all's right with the world."

"By the end of this story, everyone isn't fine," Jendresen said. "I can safely say as a storyteller with certain standards, my intention is literally as a writer, as a storyteller, as a filmmaker, to go boldly where no one has gone before."

Bringing in Jendresen was an attempt to go outside of the current realm of *Star Trek*, and focus more on an actual story, Jendresen said. It's similar to what happened in the early 1980s when Nicholas Meyer came on board to create *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. "There was a realness about it, and moviegoers had to stop and think," Jendresen said.

Reports have "Star Trek XI" being released sometime in 2007. No director and no cast have been brought in yet, but it is clear that characters from other *Star Trek* properties will not be included. ■

Talk about *Enterprise* at the May club meeting

The next meeting of the U.S.S. Chesapeake *Star Trek* and Science-Fiction Club will be held on Saturday, May 21, at the Potomac, Maryland, home of Chief Operations Officer Ann Harding.

We'll gather at 5 p.m. to go to a local restaurant for dinner that evening.

At 7 p.m., we'll return to Ann's home and

have our monthly club meeting, including discussion of upcoming conventions (including Shore Leave), find out what fellow club members are up to and get the latest *Star Trek* and other science-fiction news. We'll talk about the *Enterprise* series finale as well.

Check out the insert with this newsletter for directions. ■

IN THIS ISSUE:	
Art Credits	3
Captain's Log	2
Club Members	
Insert front	
Coming Events	6
Directions to Meeting	
Insert front	
Holodictation	6
Meeting Minutes	
Insert back	
Rantings	5
Reflections	4
Science Trek	3

CAPTAIN'S LOG: A "defiant" tall ship

After stating that my two favorite starships came from the original series (which is still my favorite *Trek*), I guess it's no surprise that my third-favorite vessel was created for my second-favorite "generation" of *Star Trek*.

I mentioned last month that I was never

impressed with the designs of *The Next Generation*. I mean, whose bright idea was it to take the efficient, battle-ready bridge of Captain Kirk's ship and turn it into a hotel lobby for the *EnterpriseD*?

But where *TNG* fell flat for me, *Deep Space Nine*

more than made up for it. From the simple elegance of the station itself to the beetle-like Dominion vessels, *DS9* finally made that century a cool place to "boldly go."

Of course, what capped off the show for me was the *Defiant*, which I liked for the simple reason that it was *unlike* any other Federation ship in *Star Trek*.

Think about it. While most other starships were long and thin, the *Defiant* was stout and compact. While the nacelles on other ships were put on projectiles far away from the main body, the nacelles on the *Defiant* were scrunched right up against its sides. While the other vessels all fired phaser beams, the *Defiant* used a rapid-fire, machine gun-like phaser attack.

While you left most other vessels through the shuttlebay doors in the back, you departed the *Defiant* through the "nose" corridor in the front. And while most other ships in that era kept getting bigger and bigger, the *Defiant* instead was "a tough little ship."

Even its name was cool. If a fleet of alien invaders is attacking through a wormhole and you only have one ship with which to defend the Alpha Quadrant, what else would you call it but "defiant?"

(And yes, I do know that the producers originally wanted to call the ship the *Valiant* but were talked out of it by Rick Berman, who was concerned that having the vessel's name start with the same letter as started the word

Voyager would be confusing to the viewers. Sometimes, things just work out for the best.)

Like everything else in *DS9*, the *Defiant* wasn't just tacked on to the series. By making the ship special to Captain Sisko, the producers also made it special to us. I still laugh when I think about everyone who groaned when they first saw the ship, only to moan just as loudly a few years later, when "their ship" was destroyed in the war with the Dominion.

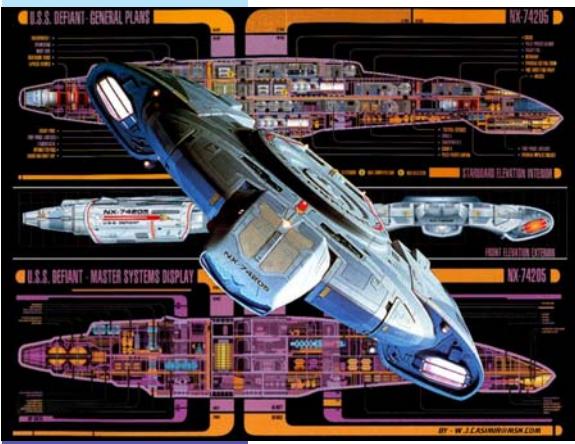
Another way the producers made the *Defiant* special was by installing a Romulan cloaking device on it, which no other Federation vessel had. Not only did this help make the *Defiant* unique, but it also made sense as a way of balancing the odds against the overwhelming forces its crew usually had to contend with.

I got a huge kick out of the way they introduced the ship. What better way for Sisko to impress Kira with the new vessel than to have it materialize, seemingly out of nowhere, right next to the station she was left to defend? Right away, I knew the *Defiant* was a major "step up" from the runabouts used on *DS9* before that.

By the way, one of my favorite scenes featuring the *Defiant* never took place on the TV show. It was during the Bring Back Kirk "trailer," when the revived Kirk took the *Enterprise A* to the wormhole to enlist Sisko's aid against the Suliban, and then, two of my favorite ships were shown flying away together from my favorite space station. Ah, the joys of fandom!

Well, that concludes a quick look at my three favorite "tall ships" in *Star Trek*. Here's hoping we get to see them in all-new action sometime soon! ■

Captain Randy Hall



Copyright 2005
U.S.S. Chesapeake
NCC-9102, a
not-for-profit
organization.
All rights reserved,
including
reproducing parts of
this document.

Check out our club
website: www.usschesapeake.org

The opinions
expressed in this
publication do not
necessarily represent
those of the
entire club.

"Star Trek,"
"Star Trek: The Next
Generation," "Star
Trek: Deep Space
Nine," "Star Trek:
Voyager," and "Star
Trek: Enterprise,"
as well as the terms
"starship" and
"starship Enterprise,"
are registered
trademarks of
Paramount Pictures
Corporation.
All rights reserved.
Absolutely no
infringement on
these rights is
intended.

SCIENCE TREK: Today's engineering, tomorrow's Enterprise

Don't blame me, blame my contractor. Somehow, it appears he, she and/or it sliced through or otherwise disconnected my phone/DSL line. So, since I don't want to type this whole column in on my cell phone to text message to our illustrious editor, I'm going to hold off on answering last month's question—how science fiction handles interstellar communication—until next month's *COMSTAR*.

Since I have no connection to the Internet (Oh, the humanity!), I'll have to come up with something out of my mind or my library. Thank goodness for my library.

If you really wanted to know the answer to last month's question this month and are now angry with me, then fine, go read Patrick's column, and I'm sure you'll feel better. Otherwise, stick around, and I'll bore you with a textbook from my undergrad days as an aerospace engineer.

In a column past (July '03, if you want to look it up), I discussed some of my technical *Trek* books, including the *ST:TNG Technical Manual* and *Blueprints, Mr. Scott's Guide to the Enterprise*, and of course, Franz Joseph's inestimable *Star Fleet Technical Manual*.

This month, we'll look at a real-life technical handbook for rocketry and space travel: *Space Mission Analysis and Design* (1991), edited by James Wertz and Wiley Larson.

This was the text from one of my later classes in which we designed or attempted to design a rocket. I was on the propulsion team, and as I recall, we decided to use a hybrid design—that is, an engine that combined solid and liquid fuel technology.

I remember sitting in the aerospace



engineering office talking long distance to a real, live engineer at a company that produced hybrid engines for NASA. Enough with the reminiscing—what you really want to know (even if you don't know it) is how a solid/liquid fuel rocket functions.

Glad you asked. To move a rocket (up hopefully), the engine needs to produce thrust (a force) downward. To accomplish this, fuel is burned and channeled out an exhaust at the bottom of the rocket. Action-reaction; simple physics, really. (Though the definition of a rocket we learned in this class is something that almost doesn't fly—quite accurate if you remember any videos of the early days of rocketry.)

Creating thrust requires both a fuel and an oxidizer, along with a way to ignite the fuel. (this last being the focus of my participation). The typical methods of ignition are electrical charge and a separately lit igniter. The fuel and oxidizer can both be liquid (oxygen and hydrogen, usually as in the space shuttle's external fuel tank and main engines), both solid (as in the shuttle's two booster rockets) or a hybrid where the fuel is solid and the oxidizer is liquid.

A solid fuel system is easier to handle but lacks the control of liquid fuel—once lit, you can't stop a solid fuel rocket like you can a liquid or hybrid unit (just cut off the oxidizer and the burn stops).

Okay, back to the text. Some of the most important information in this textbook comes in the inside cover, front and back: equations. Whether we're talking the earliest Mercury rocket or the starship *Enterprise*, the basic equations of space travel remain the same—warp drive excepted, of course.

That is, Mister Sulu easing the "Big E" into orbit around Gamma Hydra VII uses the same equations as John Glenn did in 1961. Whether or not the writers and visual effect technicians apply these scientific facts is up to them—*Trek* is science fiction, after all!

What goes into planning, developing and launching a real space mission? AKA, how to summarize 810 pages in an article under 1,000 words? Here's the version Mister Cliff Notes gave when he had to make it quick:

Mission characterization, evaluation, and
continued on page 6

ART CREDITS:	
<i>startrek.com</i>	1, 6
<i>desktopstarships.com</i>	2
<i>images.google.com</i>	3, 4
<i>dccomics.com</i>	5
<i>Dynamic Graphics</i>	Insert front
<i>hallmark.com</i>	Insert back

REFLECTIONS: Anatomy of a scriptwriter — II

When I first learned the particulars of the outline for the HOLY five-year arc, I was, believe it or not, very impressed. I love foreshadowing, the art of introducing early a plot point that will be substantial later. His five-year arc was full of foreshadowing, and I thought to myself: "This could actually be great!" I looked forward to seeing this ambitious plan on the screen.

When I finally saw the pilot, "The Gathering," I had mixed feelings. I didn't hate it, like a lot of people I know, but I wasn't entirely impressed with it. There were subtle things I liked. I loved the scene with Delenn and Sinclair in the Japanese rock garden and the foreshadowing (of course) of things to come, but the main plot of the Vorlon ambassador's visit really left me cold.

I hate cliché. Cliché is a trite expression or idea. Trite means overused and commonplace, lacking interest or originality. When I found out an ambassador was visiting Babylon 5, I knew he would either be killed or there would be an attempt on his life. Why? Because I've seen that plot a million times.

Clichéd writing is lazy writing; a good writer tries to be original or, better yet, if you must use a cliché, use it as a red herring, something that draws the attention away from the subject under notice or discussion. The show 24 is a master at using cliché or the "appearance" of cliché to disguise what they are REALLY doing.

Writing is so much easier when using cliché. Why, with the use of cliché, ANYONE can write a script. That's the problem. We've become so accustomed to seeing certain clichés that some of us just accept them or, worse yet, don't even notice them. Then again, some of us are bored by them. They tend to make your intentions rather obvious. Good writing is about surprise.

A writer's job is to make the reader or viewer WANT to turn that next page or sit anxiously through that stupid commercial to finish what he's started, unless you're one of those who reads the ending of a novel first. I've NEVER understood THAT logic.

A good writer knows how to pace a story, put in peaks and valleys that take the reader/viewer on an emotional and literary roller-coaster ride. A good story starts in one place and gradually builds to a crescendo, hopefully

leaving the reader/viewer emotionally satisfied. Unfortunately, *Babylon 5* was chock full of clichés and had the pace of a sedate snail.

Now, if you hear Straczynski tell it, this wasn't the case at all. His original aim was to avoid science-fiction clichés. Funny, when that grand old demon called a "deadline" is looking over your shoulders, cliché can seem like a godsend.

One of the things Straczynski promised he would never do was re-write scripts submitted by other writers, citing Gene Roddenberry's propensity to re-write his staff, thus assuring that his vision was coming across to the airwaves.

Many writers took him at his word, but more than a few writers have complained bitterly about his re-writing of their scripts, namely Peter David. In JMS's defense, it is HIS vision, and it is HIS responsibility to protect it.

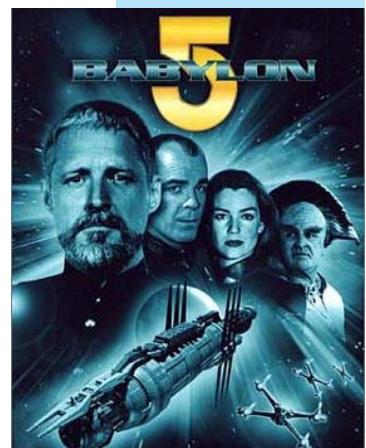
The last point I need to make is about the show's structure. Most series on television are presented as follows: Teaser — some small piece of action or drama that hooks the audience. First Act — establishes characters, situation and story being told. Second Act — develops the plot. Third Act — proceeds to solve the plot problem, and then introduces a twist or surprise. Fourth Act — solves the problem.

I mention this because it's the basic way television is done. To change this is to have your script tossed into the nearest trash can. JMS would skip the elements of Act Three entirely, substituting them for elements of Act Four, leaving his fourth act to add characterization and foreshadowing.

I actually found this pretty interesting, or at the very least, a rather bold thing to do. He only did this in the first season on the WB. Network heads may have put a stop to it, thinking that if your show's climax is in the third act, what's going to make the viewers come back for the fourth act?

Despite Straczynski's claim to the opposite, the writing on *Babylon 5* was neither ground-breaking nor different in any way. During the run of any show, there's a need for dramatic peaks, valleys, twists and turns, but this show had none of those. It stayed its

continued on page 6



RANTINGS: This looks like a job for ...

After *Supergirl* failed, the Salkinds sold their movie rights of Superman characters to Cannon films, which was able to re-assemble the cast of the original films by basically throwing money at them.

Christopher Reeve wanted a bigger part in the creative process for this movie, so he became a member of the writing team, and the result was *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace*, in which Superman decides to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

This film is a perfect example of what can happen when actors are permitted to work on pet projects they deeply believe in. This film stunk worse than Exit 13 on the Jersey Turnpike, limburger cheese and three-week-old gym socks combined.

Gene Hackman as Luthor was a complete waste, and the rest of the cast was just collecting a paycheck. You gotta worry about ANY film Mariel Hemmingway is in where she keeps her clothes on. This film crashed (Oh, if only it had burned.) when it opened in 1987.

The Salkinds had retained their television rights and produced a *Superboy* series in 1988. It was far more successful and ran until 1992. John Haymes Newton played Clark Kent/*Superboy* during the first season and then was replaced by Gerard Christopher for the duration of the syndicated show.

This was more of a "Young Superman" series and did a few stories right out of the comics. Also in 1988, CBS broadcast a *Superman* cartoon series based on the movies, with Beau Weaver voicing Clark Kent/Superman. It was produced by Ruby-Spears and was cancelled after one year.

DC Comics had rolled their Golden Age characters into one continuity called Earth-2 (No, John and Annie, not THAT one!) and their Silver Age characters into Earth-1. Comic writers concocted a story trick called "the Multiverse," which said that infinite earths occupied the same space in different dimensions. It worked so the Justice League could have an annual adventure with their counterparts in the Justice Society.

But over time, it grew out of control. Whenever DC acquired the rights to comic charters like Charlton Comics or the original Captain Marvel, a new Earth was added, so it got quite unwieldy.

In 1985, *Crisis on Infinite Earths* put all the

DC continuity into one Earth. Duplicates did not survive and were "ret-conned" out of existence, including the Golden Age Superman.

Crisis began a series of wholesale changes to capture younger readers by killing established characters and replacing them with their protégés (for example, Barry Allen dies, so Wally West becomes the Flash).

The following year, Superman was revamped by John Byrne to bring the continuity in comics in line with the Christopher Reeve movies. This began almost annual revamps or "major story shake-ups" that still continue to this day.

In 1992, Superman died in a battle with a creature named Doomsday. He was "replaced" by four beings, some laying claim to the name "Superman." It turned out that the battle with Doomsday exhausted all of his yellow-sun powers and left him in a "deathlike trance." Over the course of a year, the Man of Steel returned.

Later, in a separate revamp, Clark Kent was "killed." One year, Superman was turned into an energy creature, and several months later, he was split in two; a red one and a blue one, and then returned to "normal." It seems that the readers WANTED Superman in the blue tights and red cape and boots.

The BIGGEST change came in 1996, when Clark Kent married Lois Lane. It wasn't any imaginary story or an "Elseworld." It was a real part of the continuity.

Back on TV, *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* flew on the scene in 1993, starring Dean Cain as Clark Kent/Superman and Terri Hatcher as Lois Lane. It updated the legend and ran on ABC until 1997. The show stayed true to the comics, but was not hamstrung by them. Lois and Clark got married as well to match comics continuity.

That episode aired the same week *Superman: The Animated Series* premiered on the WB in 1996, with Tim Daly voicing Clark Kent/Superman. For one brief shining moment, a Superman live-action series was in production and airing at the same time as a Superman animated program. Both were good, and both were popular. But it was not to last.

"*That he's mad, 'tis true, 'tis true 'tis pity, And pity 'tis, 'tis true.*" ■

Officer Peter Chewning



A John Byrne pin-up of Superman.

COMING EVENTS

MAY

May 21 It "may" be time for our next monthly meeting! We'll talk about the *Enterprise* finale, among other things! For directions, check out the insert that is included with this issue of COMSTAR.

REFLECTIONS: Anatomy of a scriptwriter ... (continued)

continued from page 4

course, a perfect straight line throughout its entire run. It was like driving through Nebraska: no surprises, no hills and no peaks.

All in all, I give the show an "A" for effort

but a "D" in execution. In my humble opinion, a writing staff would have made all the difference in the world.

Next month: The end is near. ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard

SCIENCE TREK: Today's engineering ... (continued)

continued from page 3

requirements definition (why you're going up and what you need to do to get there); space mission geometry, astrodynamics, orbit and constellation design (the laws of physics); space environment and survivability; defining and sizing payloads (what you're going to bring and how); spacecraft design and sizing, including subsystems, manufacture, testing, computer systems, communications architecture and propulsion; mission operations, ground system design, launch systems, logistics and reliability, cost modeling and limits on mission design.

So, what are the differences between today's spacecraft and tomorrow's starships? Today, we're looking to get the most payload

into orbit for the lowest cost. We're developing short-duration missions with the technology available.

Tomorrow, we're designing ships for interstellar travel and physics far beyond today's reality. Just remember, though, as best we can tell from nearly 40 years of *Trek*, the basic equations of physics haven't changed. Force still equals mass times acceleration. The equations are the same—it's the numbers that change. At least, until Zefram Cochrane comes along. ■

Web Notes:

(Since I have no access to the Web, you'll have to come up with your own links this time.)

Second Officer Phil Margolies

HOLODICTATION: Shore Leave

Whenever we as a society have the time for "fun and games," do we really know how to have fun?

In the episode "Shore Leave" from Classic *Trek*, the crew discovered a pleasure planet, a world that was made so people could have fun and the only thing you had to do was think about what you wanted.

After the crew learned that this was a good thing, Captain Kirk chose two things to do that would allow him to have fun.

The first was rekindling a romance with a former girl friend, and the second was to exact a little just punishment on a former classmate (Finnegan).

Now, I'd like for you to stop and really think. If you were able to do anything in this world that would allow you to have the ulti-

mate fun and let you totally unwind, what would it be?

Let me preface that question with this: It has to be something that you'd be able to do in this world. It would be nice to be able to be the Flash or travel with a Stargate team, but that's not possible right now.

So with this in mind, what would it be? Would you live out your dream job or would you spend time with your favorite person? I know what I'd do. As a matter of fact, I'm going to be doing it real soon. It involves water, a boat and warm breezes.

So in your daily travels, don't forget how to have fun and that fun is nature's safety valve for stress.

Aloha! ■

Weapons Officer Patrick McBee



Doctor McCoy enjoys "Shore Leave."