

COMSTAR

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



May, 2006



Eugene Roddenberry, the son of *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry, speaks at the 25th International Space Development Conference.

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Star Trek continues to influence the worlds of science

For a franchise that's not airing any new television episodes or movies, *Star Trek* sure continues to have an impact on the scientific community.

For example, several *Trek*-connected people attended the 25th International Space Development Conference, where Eugene Roddenberry, Jr., made award presentations to Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen and Virgin Galactic's Richard Branson and where *Star Trek* technicians and designers talked about the evolution of the franchise.

Senior illustrator Rick Sternbach spoke on space art, and scenic artist Michael Okuda discussed the series' graphic design. The conference was co-hosted by the National Space Society and the Planetary Society, so there were also astronauts and aerospace professionals discussing theoretical subjects like warp travel and how to regenerate interest in the space program.

Sternbach presented a slide show on the evolution of space art, explaining how real life observation with improved telescopes had led to more realistic renderings of other worlds.

Along with Okuda, Sternbach explained the logic behind the designs for various spaceships and shuttles in *Next Gen* and later *Trek*, including their engines, escape hatches and continuity with the original series.

You "may" want to go to the next club meeting!

The next meeting of the U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek and Science-Fiction Club will be held on Saturday, May 20, at the Hard Times Cafe located in College Park, Maryland.

We'll gather at 5:00 p.m. for dinner, followed by our club meeting which will begin no later than 7:00 p.m. We'll talk about upcoming conventions, what fellow club

Okuda said that when he began to work on *The Next Generation*, "We very, very much wanted to respect what had come before, but it did need to be totally different." The crew deliberately paid homage to Kirk's *Enterprise*, and did so again in designing Archer's retro bridge on the NX-01.

Both Okuda and Sternbach said that they hoped to be called to work on *Star Trek XI*.

Also, not only Romulans and Klingons will have cloaking devices if two mathematicians, Nicolae Nicorovici and Graeme Milton, have their way.

The BBC News reported that a research paper by the two published in a U.K. Royal Society journal suggests that when objects are placed close to a resonating "superlens," they will appear to vanish due to a phenomenon they term "anomalous localized resonance."

"The phenomenon is analogous to a tuning fork (which rings with a single sound frequency) being placed next to a wine glass. The wine glass will start to ring with the same frequency; it resonates," explained BBC science reporter Paul Rincon, noting that the light waves work much the same as sound waves. "The resonance effectively cancels out the light bouncing off the speck of dust, rendering the dust particle invisible." The device may not work on all matter, however. ■

members are up to and the latest news regarding *Star Trek* and other science-fiction television shows and movies.

Do you need to get directions to be able to travel to the May meeting? Then you should be sure to check out the insert that you can download to your computer from our online Yahoo! Group. ■

CAPTAIN'S LOG: Thank heaven for *Star Trek XI*

The news came well after the April newsletter was done and just before that month's club meeting. J.J. Abrams (of *Alias* and *LOST* fame) had been signed on by Paramount to produce the 11th feature film of the *Star Trek* franchise.

Like anything else in fandom, the reaction ranged anywhere from delirium to skepticism. Would young Kirk and Spock crash their shuttle on a mysterious desert planet, with Janice Rand secretly a martial-arts expert for Section 31? Or would Abrams become the Harve Bennett of the "next generation" of *Trek*?

Either way, the announcement breathed new life into the celebration of *Star Trek*'s 40th anniversary. What had been a wistful look back at the greatest science-fiction franchise in history lit up with speculation on a suddenly concrete future.

Assuming Abrams brings the project to fruition, he's certainly under a LOT of pressure. He's responsible for either reviving a beloved tradition or driving the final stake through its heart, according to online message boards.

One thing's certain: Abrams needs to bring something new to *Trek*, and along those lines, I'm suggesting three ideas that would hopefully maximize the fun and minimize the risk of a new movie.

The Five Captains. Yeah, I refuse to give up on this concept, even though a number of folks dismiss it as just a "gimmick." Still, *Trek* doesn't have much going for it now, and done well, this could be an event that would draw fans of every "generation" to the theaters.

The most popular character in each *Trek* tends to be the captain, and seeing Kirk and Sisko or Picard and Janeway working together could be, as they say, *fascinating*.

However, the clock's ticking on this one, and none of us are getting any younger, including William Shatner. Mix in a few guest stars like Leonard Nimoy as Spock and Jeri Ryan as Seven of Nine, and you could have a classic in the making.

The Titan Maneuver. But let's say the unthinkable happens and some of the actors, for one reason or another, are not available for a new movie. What then?

At that point, I'd literally take a page out

of the *Trek* novels produced by Pocket Books; specifically, the series set on the starship *Titan*.

With Riker and Troi at the helm, you could populate a new ship with a crew of favorite old characters (and a few new ones for good measure). Tuvok or Saavik could represent the Vulcan contingent, and you just know Michael Dorn would quickly agree to wear his old "turtle head" if quatloos are involved.

Andorians have been making a comeback lately, so let's have Shar or Shran's descendant on the vessel as an excuse to bring in Jeffrey Combs. And there's always the concept of introducing *Trek*'s first computer-generated alien, though getting him/her/it to go to conventions would be a challenge.

Gotta admit I'd love to have some of our favorite humans (or humanoids) back, like Kira or Dax from *DS9*, Chakotay or the holographic Doctor from *Voyager* and even, through the miracle of time travel, Hoshi or Reed from *Enterprise*.

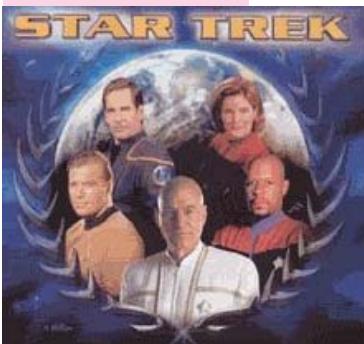
As my favorite starship captain would say, that "sounds like fun" to me!

The New Voyages. If that concept won't fly, we could always do what our friends in the *New Voyages* fan films have done, which is recast. I was firmly against this a few years ago, but with De Kelley and Jimmy Doohan beamed up to the big *Enterprise* in the sky, we may have to face sad reality and find other actors to fill those characters' boots.

As for which crew to use, I think we'd all agree that those from *DS9*, *Voyager* and *Enterprise* are not as well known as the first two *Treks*, and the fact that *Insurrection* and *Nemesis* did so poorly eliminates *TNG* from solo consideration.

But everybody knows at least some members from the original crew, and yeah, there'd be a shock to seeing new faces playing old characters, but maybe Harve Bennett had a good idea using Shatner and Nimoy at the beginning and end of the movie to ease the transition to a new/old crew.

Anyway, those are my ideas. I'm sure that you folks have plenty of your own, and we'll hear lots more during the months to come. Whatever happens, it's new territory for our favorite franchise, so thank heaven for *Star Trek XI!* ■



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"Star Trek,"
"Star Trek: The Next
Generation," "Star
Trek: Deep Space
Nine," "Star Trek:
Voyager," and "Star
Trek: Enterprise,"
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SCIENCE TREK: A little deeper into space

“Better, faster, cheaper’ is here because we can’t afford anything else.”--Wes Huntress, NASA’s associate administrator for space science

In the early 1990s, under Administrator Dan Goldin, NASA started the Discovery/ New Millennium Program, an initiative to design, build and launch missions “better, faster and cheaper.”

These missions brought some of NASA’s greatest recent successes, including Mars Pathfinder (1997), Lunar Prospector (1998) and Deep Space One (1998).

Other missions, however, weren’t so successful: the failed 1998 Mars Polar Lander, for instance, which apparently crash-landed. The purpose of the New Millennium Program was (is) to test new technologies at a low cost for use on future missions.

A couple of years ago (June 1999 to be precise), I wrote a column on Deep Space One, NASA’s 1998 mission intended “to test 12 advanced technologies in deep space to lower the cost and risk to future science-driven missions that use them for the first time” (http://nmp.nasa.gov/ds1/quick_facts.html).

Launched from Cape Canaveral on October 24, 1998, the spacecraft flew by Comet Borrelly in September of 2001 and was retired on December 18, 2001. Once Deep Space One completed its primary technological mission in 1999, it was sent on an extended scientific one, including fly-bys of an asteroid and a comet.

This month, I want to revisit the Deep Space series (NASA’s, that is, not Paramount’s) and see how we’re doing on our journey to *Deep Space Nine*.

The second Deep Space mission, Deep Space Two involved two five-pound impactors hosting 10 new technologies, intended to eject from the Mars Polar Lander on its descent, plummet to the surface of Mars at over 400 miles per hour and bury themselves in the surface.

And, oh yeah, radio up to the orbiting Mars Global Surveyor to report their status (details at the Deep Space Two site—see Web Notes).

Unfortunately, the success of Deep Space One was not to be repeated. Everything looked good for this mission from its launch

on January 3, 1999, to its intended arrival at Mars on December 3 of that year.

However, neither the Mars Polar Lander nor the twin Deep Space Two probes ever reported in to mission control. Despite numerous attempts, NASA was never able to establish communication with the Lander or the probes.

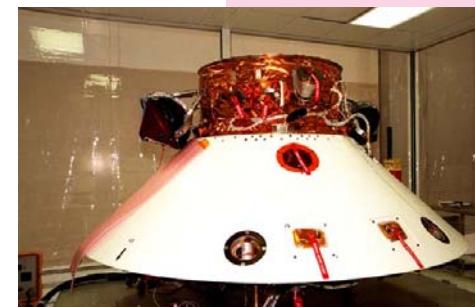
Aside: The super-secret National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) has been covertly taking pictures of Mars (since the Clinton administration!) and, in 2001, thought they had spotted the intact spacecraft on the surface of Mars. (Preliminary NASA analysis had indicated the spacecraft crashed into the surface.) The debate between NASA and NIMA continues to this day, but it may be resolved by new probes, including the recently arrived Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter.

Apparently, with no *Trek* on television, NASA felt it needed to move away from *Trek* references. Hence, Deep Space Three has been renamed Space Technology Three. This mission, originally scheduled for launch in 2003 2005 2006, was intended to demonstrate the viability of three-spacecraft interferometry (Ask Abby to explain the details—the \$.01 version is three small space telescopes = highly detailed image).

Alas, it fell victim to multiple renamings (It was last called Starlight.) and budget cuts and never made it off the ground. Similarly, Deep Space Four—intended to rendezvous with comet Tempel 1—never made it to the launch pad, either (cancelled July 1, 1999).

On a positive note, though, Space Technology 5 launched on March 22, 2006, on a 90-day mission to map Earth’s magnetic field with three micro-satellites. As NASA describes it, ST-5’s mission “is to demonstrate and space-test the ability of ‘smart’ satellites to identify scientific events and implement cooperative data-taking strategies” (<http://nmp.nasa.gov/st5/TECHNOLOGY/tech-index.html>).

Let’s hope this mission revives NASA’s journey toward Deep Space—err, Space Technology Nine.



The Deep Space Two probe before it was launched.

ART CREDITS:
startrek.com 1, 2,
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images.google.com
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sitstay.com 6

Continued on page 6

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REFLECTIONS: Chasing space

1993. Brian Henson was restless. Sure, the Jim Henson Company, which was formed by his father, was very successful. They had a couple of long-running television shows under their belt, several successful movies, countless television commercials . . . In short, they were making a lot of money. But to coin a cliche, that wasn't enough.

Brian Henson had long been a science-fiction fan. To add fuel to another cliche, Brian Henson was a huge *Star Trek* fan, and he wanted a taste of what *Star Trek* had.

Now, Brian Henson was a man who thought in broad strokes, as opposed to limiting his scope to the here and now. He didn't just want to bask in the glory of geek fandom; he already had that. Henson harbored aspirations of being the next Gene Roddenberry.

Let me set the atmosphere of the time. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was running then, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* had just started, and *Babylon 5*'s pilot had just aired. *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* was going strong, and *The X-Files* was preparing to start that fall. Genre show mania seemed to fill the air, and it seemed like a good time to get on the ground floor of this burgeoning form of entertainment.

"We wanted it to be more alien than any other television series—bolder, more emotional—and to have stronger, richer characters than on other SF shows. We knew we needed a concept that allowed the characters to be a little more dialed up." Thus, *Space Chase* was born.

Henson set out to create characters that he felt were well beyond the normal realm of science-fiction television. Jamie Courtier of the Creature Shop (another Henson company) was brought in to create a conceptional presentation, and maquettes (miniature sculptures) of the various characters were made, along with models of the spaceships that might populate this part of the universe.

"*Space Chase*'s original concept was an

even more complex animatronic project than *Farscape* turned out to be. Even the main characters underwent a drastic transformation. D'Argo was initially a much more *lionesque* being. Moya was a robot and more of a comic character. Zhan was a rotund blue man, and Scorpius was an insect-like character with claws and mandibles. Of the Creature Shop created regulars, only Rygel and Pilot retained their original form."

Henson had a basic idea, and he had a plan. Now, all Henson needed was a writer to bring his project to fruition, since he knew he needed someone to flesh out his creation and give his show heart. Bill Haber, the Henson Company's agent, suggested Rockne S. O'Bannon, a great writer, a man of vision and someone Haber already represented. Coincidentally, O'Bannon ALSO harbored dreams of becoming the next Gene Roddenberry (I am NOT making this up!). It was a match made in heaven.

"The first meeting I had was with Brian Henson and then Alex Rockwell, who was their head of television. They had one page which they had come up with in house, which I've STILL got buried in a drawer somewhere. There was a lifter-loader, a big lumbering thing, and the captain of the ship was a blind woman. This one-page idea had some bizarre things that you could conceivably make an Sf novel out of, but a blind female lead is a tough one to sell to the network.

"The initial plan was for Moya to be populated by literally hundreds of prisoners. It was a prison ship, so taking a leaf from the *Star Trek* book, there would be so many characters on board that we could have entire stories that take place on the ship with new characters who we've never met before. But once we got into the production reality of it, we realized there was no way we could do that.

"I came back and told them my notions," O'Bannon said. "Rather than have the *Star Trek* military hierarchy and all that, it would be a situation of anarchy. The crowning glory of the idea, which sustains itself to this moment, is the concept of a man from our time dropped into the middle of this world at the other end of the universe. The idea of *Farscape* is taking essentially any one of us and dropping us into *Star Wars*."

To be continued next month. ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard



RANTINGS: Another loogie from Les

We pre-empt tonight's episode of *Batman*. My spy has unearthed another memo. No, it's not the administration's plans for war in Iran. It's another screed from Les (I — FOOKIN' — HATE *STAR TREK*) Moonves to *Star Trek* fans. As before, it is presented without comment.

Dear Worms:

Apparently, you losers don't get the message. There's been considerable rumormongering regarding a script by Erik Janderson called *Star Trek: The Beginning*. Well, let me make it nice and clear for you. It's DEAD. I've killed it.

I told you schmucks before that we're just going to go through the motions and make promises that we have *absolutely no intention of keeping*. We just want you to spend your money on stuff that you have seen a thousand times before, but we will not be developing any new *Star Trek* films or television programs.

SO WHAT if 2006 is the 40th anniversary of *Star Trek*? I do not freakin' care. If a bunch of sniveling, candyass idiots like you want to waste your time celebrating a show that really was crap when it was made in the 1960s, I can't stop you. Just do not expect *any* cooperation from us.

However, it's about time I shattered your illusions. TV programs are not produced to entertain the masses. They're produced as filler in between commercials. The only reason we do *anything* is to make those of us who are already rich even richer by exploiting weak-willed cattle like you.

We want your money; we do not care HOW we get it, and we do not give a damn about you. In fact, I had hoped that canceling *Enterprise* would have driven all of you to mass suicide, but apparently not.

That's too bad, too, because you all really are worthless.

Here's a preview of what I have in store for you morons. First, Rick Berman is OUT of the *Star Trek* production office. Since we're not doing any *Star Trek*, there's no reason to keep that no-talent assclown on the payroll.

It has been announced that J. J. Abrams is going to write, produce and direct the 11th *Star Trek*. That is true; we have hired him to do just that.

Now, don't start dancing naked in the

streets yet. While we're pleased with *Mission: Impossible III*, we're essentially paying Abrams to take a working vacation. He'll write a script and submit it. We'll make announcements, it will be developed, submitted to re-write and put into turn-around, but in the end, the result will be the same.

There are an infinite number of road-blocks that can grind a film to a halt even before one frame of film is shot, and I WILL use them all. I really wish you freaks would get this through your heads that *I will not allow this or any Star Trek film or series to be produced*.

We're going to raise your hopes that this "film" will be about Kirk and Spock and just see how fast we dash those hopes. We're floating the idea of Ben Affleck as Captain Kirk. Abrams is already backing out as the director.

You thought there were a lot of twists and turns in getting the new *Superman* film made? You ain't seen nothing yet.

Why do you think I've seized control of TV production at Paramount for CBS, shut down UPN and merged it with that other loser network, The WB?

Why do you think I personally appointed the head of production at Paramount studios before we split it off? I'm dismantling the infrastructure so it will be next to impossible to produce any *Star Trek* now or for at least the next 50 years.

And why am I being such a petty, vindictive, venal bastard? For the best reason of all: because I CAN. I hate you nerds. I'd dearly LOVE to have Homeland Security pack every single one of you off to some gulag worse than Guantanamo Bay.

What's that? You say you haven't done anything to warrant such treatment? Haven't you been paying attention? I don't need proof. I only have to make the accusation, and then you're gone.

Don't make me warn you again.

Les Moonves

Next month: Same Bat-Time, Same Bat Channel.

*"The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils."* —
Jessica

Procurement Officer Peter Chewning



COMING EVENTS

MAY

May 20 It's time for the May club meeting at the Hard Times Cafe in College Park, Maryland! We'll gather at 5:00 p.m. for our dinner, then hold our meeting no later than 7:00 p.m. Be sure to get directions in our Yahoo! Group.

JUNE

June 17 Happy Summer! We'll get together for our June meeting as we prepare for the upcoming Shore Leave convention. More info next month!

SCIENCE TREK: A little deeper into space concluded

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Web Notes:

- <http://nmp.nasa.gov/ds1/> (Deep Space One);
- <http://nmp.nasa.gov/ds2/> (Deep Space Two);
- http://www.space.com/news/nasa_faster_991206.html (Is it better, faster and

cheaper?);

- <http://mpfwww.jpl.nasa.gov/msp98/> (Mars Polar Lander);
- <http://nmp.nasa.gov/st4/> (ST-4); and
- <http://nmp.nasa.gov/st5/> (ST-5). ■

Second Officer Phil Margolies

RED AND ROVER

