



A screen shot from the "Star Trek: Legacy" video game.

"Star Trek: Legacy" video game unites all five starship captains

A video game is doing something the entire *Star Trek* franchise hasn't been able to accomplish yet — bring all five starship captains together for one project.

"*Star Trek: Legacy*," due out in October, will let players steer more than 60 starships — spanning all five of the franchise's live-action TV series — into combat against foes such as the Klingons and the all-assimilating Borg.

William Shatner, who played Captain James T. Kirk in the *Star Trek* television series and movies, is voicing the character that first made him famous.

"The interest in *Star Trek* has waned in the last couple of years," Shatner said in a telephone interview. "It's been around a long time. It's a staple of American life, and I think we need something new and different in *Star Trek*."

In addition to Shatner, the actors who sat in the captain's chairs in the other four shows, including Patrick Stewart from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Avery Brooks from *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Kate Mulgrew from *Star Trek: Voyager* and Scott Bakula from *Star Trek: Enterprise*, have also agreed to voice lines in the game.

With the exit from TV last year of *Star Trek: Enterprise* and the next feature film not expected until at least 2008, some fans fret that Starfleet is showing vulnerability — not

to photon torpedoes and cloaking devices but to audience apathy.

Shatner, who said he doesn't play video games but has a grandson who is keen to teach him, hopes the medium can keep the *Star Trek* flame burning.

"Once again, it's renewing itself," Shatner said.

The first *Star Trek* television show, created by Gene Roddenberry and starring Shatner, aired in 1966.

In recent years, Shatner's TV acting career has heated up as he won Emmys for playing eccentric lawyer Denny Crane in two shows, *The Practice* and *Boston Legal*. He last lent his voice to a video game in 1997's "*Star Trek: Starfleet Academy*," according to the Internet Movie Database.

"I couldn't imagine someone else playing Captain Kirk, even in a video game, so I kind of got a little territorial," he said.

Apart from "Legacy," Shatner recently released his latest novel in collaboration with Judith and Garfield Reeves-Stevens, *Captain's Glory*. Shatner also was roasted on a recent special airing on the Comedy Central cable channel.

"*Star Trek: Legacy*" is being published by Bethesda Softworks, a popular producer of video games. ■

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Time for fun in the sun at the August pool party!

The August meeting of the U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek and Science-Fiction Club will be held on Saturday, August 26, at the Gaithersburg, Maryland, home of the parents of First Officer Abby Lindstrom.

We'll gather at 4:00 p.m. for fun in the pool, then have dinner at 5:00 p.m., followed by our club meeting, which will begin no later

than 7:00 p.m. We'll talk about the recent Las Vegas convention, what fellow club members are up to and the latest news about *Star Trek* and other sci-fi television shows and movies.

Need directions to get to the August meeting? Then check out the insert that you can download to your computer from our online Yahoo! Group. ■

CAPTAIN'S LOG: The Vegas touch

I'm writing this in the Las Vegas Hilton as the big convention marking the 40th anniversary of *Star Trek* is wrapping up. It's been a terrific four days, and I'm glad several members of our club could be here to enjoy it.

I can't help but be amazed that a decade has passed by since Lorenzo Heard, David Brewer and I drove down from D.C. to Huntsville, Alabama, to commemorate *Trek*'s 30th birthday. Time flies and all that.

As you might expect, Creation didn't pull off a flawless convention. For example, on the first day, many people stood in line for up to four hours waiting to buy tickets to the event, so that put a damper on the morning. Then there was more standing in line when buying tickets for autographs and even more to purchase pictures for the guests to sign.

It seemed as though Creation considered what was possibly the biggest *Star Trek* convention ever, drawing more than 10,000 fans, the same as a small-town gathering. Still, the con got more things right than wrong, including the following.

Guests: There were plenty of stars from every *Trek*, and they were all great on stage. Among the folks we heard from were four of the captains, and they delighted the audience with stories of their time in the center seat.

Avery Brooks was one of the first guests of the weekend, and the man who played Captain Sisko on *Deep Space Nine* remains one of the best people at entertaining and enlightening his listeners. I was lucky to finally get through the registration line in time to hear at least some of his talk.

While Kate Mulgrew also was great onstage, the highlight of the weekend for me came on Saturday, when William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy took turns talking to a jammed auditorium about the beginning of *Trek*, then shared the spotlight while cracking each other up — along with the rest of us.

The last day featured the first visit to a *Trek* convention by Scott Bakula, Jonathan Archer on *Enterprise*. Since the untimely end of that show, he's grown long hair and joined his fellow captains in recording material for a new "cross-generational" video game called "*Star Trek: Legacy*" that was written by D.C. Fontana and will be out this fall.

It was also cool to hear some other folks who aren't regulars at East Coast cons, like Diana Muldaur (Pulaski from *The Next Generation*) and Mariette Hartley (Zarabeth from the Classic *Trek* episode "All Our Yesterdays").

And they continued the tradition of having a room where fans could get autographs from *Trek* guest stars like Suzi Plakson (Selar and K'Eylehr on *The Next Generation*) and even the guy who played "young Spock" in *Star Trek III*.

Merchandise: The dealers' room was huge and was loaded with great stuff to buy. There was the first issue of the new *Star Trek* magazine, nifty T-shirts aplenty and a great collection of action figures to boot.

Of course, when you're at the Las Vegas Hilton, there's always the *Star Trek* Experience to ... experience, and they had lots of items introduced since my last visit during the 20th century.

One of those items was the Borg Invasion 4-D, which was a lot of fun, though I still like the original Klingon "ride" better. I also took the backstage tour, which shows you the Experience from a whole different perspective.

Fellow fans: With that many people who love *Star Trek* all in the same place, it was also a blast to talk with Trekkies from all over the world. I spent time in one of those loooong lines chatting with a couple from England who'd combined the con with a family vacation so they could celebrate the anniversary with other fans.

Naturally, costumers were the convention's "best-dressed" people. Along with a family of Andorians and a couple that dressed their dogs in *Next Gen* uniforms, you could find everyone from the Borg Queen to a Bajoran kai and yes, lots of folks wearing those obviously plastic Spock ears throughout the convention.

The contingent from the U.S.S. *Chesapeake* capped off the event with dinner at Quark's as Annie and John White, Ann Harding, Dottie Bruce, Lorenzo and I shared some food that was out of this world with a fan we'd met during the convention.

Now, all I have to do is get all my stuff onto the plane tomorrow. Where's a good transporter when you really need one? ■

Captain Randy Hall



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SCIENCE *TREK*: Close to home

I always thought that when the tsunami comes, I'm heading for the hills. The Appalachians, that is. I ought to be pretty safe a thousand or two feet above sea level, right? And a couple hundred miles inland. Thirty-five and a half million years ago, I wouldn't have been.

Earlier this evening, my wife and I attended our first University of Maryland Observatory Open House. (I've wanted to go for years, but excuses always cropped up.)

First was a fascinating lecture called "A Cosmic Detective Story: The Chesapeake Bay Impact Crater" by Greg Redfern, attended by a cosmic assortment 8 to 88 years of age. Following the lecture, we had the opportunity to view the moon and stars through one of the observatory's four telescopes.

Thirty-five million or so years ago, Richmond, Virginia, was a coastal town (or would have been had Richmond or Virginia existed back then). The Blue Ridge mountains ran nearer the coast in those days. One fine sunny day, an extraterrestrial body (comet or asteroid, the jury's still deliberating) 2.5 miles across smashed through the Earth's atmosphere at 12 miles per second and slammed into the 1,000-foot-deep waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

Within five seconds, the object was obliterated, along with much of what it hit — an impact yielding the equivalent of several million million tons of TNT will do that. Head across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel connecting Norfolk to the Delmarva Peninsula, and you'll pass over the heart of the crater.

(Recent research has shown that the actual impact crater may only be 25 miles across caused by an object a bit less than two miles wide, with the impact yielding the equivalent of 1.75 million megatons of TNT. The larger disrupted area — out to 53 miles — is caused by deformation of weak rock rather than the direct impact in the latest theories.)

The impact sent a tsunami 4,000 feet high across the Blue Ridge mountains to the west and across the Atlantic to the east. (Tsunami debris from this catastrophe has been found as far west as Ohio.) It has been suggested that the blast wiped out most if not all life from New York to Georgia.

This was a regional event, not like the more common city-killer-size impactor nor the Chicxulub event of 63 million years ago (you know, the one that at a minimum provided major funding for the extinction of the dinosaurs).

Life is tenacious, as we have often seen. Extremophiles, microbes that thrive in environments that would kill nearly anyone/thing else, live around volcanic vents on the sea floor as well as miles deep below rock or ice.

Some of the scientists researching the Chesapeake Bay impact crater are biologists who are looking for signs of these bizarre life forms. Though the biologists' report has not been published, Redfern said he'd heard the results were positive.

One cool thought for scientists and science-fiction fans is that if extremophiles can thrive in the unlikeliest places on Earth, what about other worlds? For instance, beneath the surface of Mars or in methane lakes on Saturn's moon, Titan.

We know life — microbes and simple organisms — can survive the frozen vacuum of space: A European Space Agency flight in May 2005 demonstrated that lichens can survive for two weeks in open space. (Panspermia is a topic for another time.)

If you want to see the threat of an asteroid or comet in science fiction, try Classic *Trek*'s "The Paradise Syndrome" or rent *Armageddon* or *Deep Impact*. For real-world science, try some of the Web sites below ... or travel to Winslow, Arizona, to see Barringer Meteor Crater (the first impact crater discovered on Earth).

For comparison:

Barringer Meteor Crater: 1 mile across caused 50,000 years ago by a 150-foot-wide impactor striking with the force of 2.5 megatons of TNT.

Chesapeake Bay Impact Crater: 25-53 miles across caused 35 million years ago by an impactor 2-2.5 miles wide and yielding a blast equal to 1.75-3 million megatons of TNT.

Chicxulub Crater: About 115 miles across (Only two known craters on Earth are larger.) caused 65 million years ago by 6.5-mile-wide impactor slamming into the Earth with the equivalent of 100 million megatons of TNT.

By the way, a Barringer-size asteroid may
continued on page 6



The *Enterprise* chases an asteroid in "The Paradise Syndrome."

ART CREDITS:
startrek.com 1, 2, 3
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images.google.com
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REFLECTIONS: The great 'scape

Having been brought into existence as part of the answer to my sci-fi television prayers (see the April column of "Reflections"), *Farscape* quickly became one of a few shows that made up MY version of "Must See TV."

The show in itself was interesting, even though it could also be very cliched, especially in its story telling. Nevertheless, I looked forward to seeing *Farscape* every week.

Well, at least I did at first.

It was a very schizophrenic program, which I know pleased David Kemper, but I always felt it harmed the show more than it helped. *Farscape* could be both witty and cornball, which in itself is not an easy task, but that could put off a lot of people, preventing the show from being a ratings giant.

But let's start from the beginning.

As you know, I'm NOT a big fan of cliché in any way, shape or form. It's lazy writing for the lazy writer, and even though it's been said many a time that *Farscape* turns a cliché on its head, I ask, "So what?" An upside-down cliché is STILL a cliché.

The fact that John Crichton was human always disturbed me. The fact that he was American drove me out of my mind. This was a cliché, but I don't hold it against the show because I HOPE I know why it was done.

Networks are very skittish about their characters and how people relate to them. No network in the U.S. would have touched the show if it didn't have ONE character that the executives felt the people could relate to. I didn't like it, but I understood it, so I didn't hold it against them.

The circumstances by which he was thrust into this other galaxy gave me pause, as did his propensity for saving the day (and people complained about Wesley Crusher). The fact that he was always barking orders to the others, even though he was a newcomer, disturbed me big time.

Still, Crichton's sense of humor went a long way in placating these misgivings. I was particularly taken with the fact that a lot of Crichton's humorous asides were indeed ad-libs by Ben Browder himself. Some they used, some they didn't, some they kept for a later episode. (I knew calling D'Argo "Heavy D" was his.) All of this went into making Ben Browder one of my favorite actors, but not one of my favorite characters.

I originally had a problem with Claudia Black; not with Aeryn Sun, but the actress herself. I thought her acting was rather plain, and because of that, her character seemed to be just taking up space. Her face showed very little emotion.

It wasn't until the second-season episode "The Way We Weren't," written by former *Next Generation* writer/science consultant Naren Shankar, that I totally understood how the Sebacean Peacekeepers were raised, and suddenly, Black's portrayal made sense.

The episode was not only beautifully written (Drama is not the best suit for most science-fiction television. That includes *Stargate* and a host of other shows.), but in explaining the Peacekeeper mentality, it also explained Claudia Black's choice of acting chops.

Her character was far from original as well: devoid of sentiment, pledging her life totally to tour of duty for God and country. While hardly original, her portrayal was inspiring, which explains the stellar performances on *Stargate SG-1*, even though her character is horribly out of place ... but that's another column.

I never liked the prospect of a Crichton/Aeryn relationship. No, check that. I HATED it! The joining of the show's two stars is not only too predictable and cliched beyond words, but it has been proven time and time again to be the (no pun intended) kiss of death. I used to literally pray that the producers would change their minds and not go down that road that has been taken to death! I'm surprised I never burst into flames with all that praying back then.

I liked D'Argo, but again, his character was hardly original. He was a big guy, so naturally, he had to be of a warrior race, and that was the problem. He was a Klingon with a lion's mane, nasty disposition and Gene Simmons' (of the rock band KISS) tongue.

Every warrior race in the known universe must sign an affidavit forcing them all to be hard drinkers, hard fighters, hard lovers and hard headed. It gets monotonous. I often long for the day when we will see a soft-spoken, introspective, sensitive and intelligent warrior. That would be a nice change of pace.

Next month: The most original character in years, and the bane of my existence: the Muppets! ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard



WAYNE'S WORLDS: The Sci Fi Channel tries to hit warp speed

This occasional column will return as needed, usually when space permits in issues of COMSTAR.

Ever since it began its existence broad-coasting shows like the original *Battlestar Galactica* and *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* in prime time, the Sci Fi Channel has been aiming for the stars.

Not content to pull in ratings that surpass such stalwart cable networks as The Golf Channel and VH-1, Sci Fi execs have been interested in original programming. As Lorenzo has documented in his "Reflections" column, they have introduced such new shows as *Farscape* and *First Wave*.

With each step, Sci Fi has expanded its influence and reputation as THE science-fiction network on cable. It wasn't long before they wooed *Stargate SG-1* from the Showtime pay channel to join their line-up.

Other shows have come and gone, some very much missed by fans. We remember *The Invisible Man* and *The Chronicle*, among others. But with each step in its evolution, Sci Fi has expanded its base and attracted more and more genre fans.

This process hasn't been without its ups and downs, though. For a while there, Sci Fi had two nights of new shows, Friday and Sunday. But the shows on Sunday night eventually gave way to more movies.

Their attempts to bring original sci-fi movies to Saturday nights haven't delivered a lot of stellar programming. I'll never forget the totally awful two-hour *Gargoyles* film, which I couldn't bear to watch more than an hour of. However, *Vampires: Out For Blood* was one of the best vampire films I've ever seen, full of twists and surprises. For those who missed it, it is available on DVD.

Recently, Sci Fi decided to spin off *SG-1* and launch *Stargate Atlantis*, and the "gate" franchise was born. Both *SG-1* and *Atlantis* are doing well in syndication and in European and other foreign markets.

One show that has caught the imagination of many science-fiction fans has been the re-imagining of *Battlestar Galactica* by David Eick and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* alumnus Ronald D. Moore.

Since its miniseries a few years back, *Gal-*

actica has tackled interesting issues through complex characters and situations. This caught the attention of the network's parent company, and a few episodes aired on NBC. They didn't bring in the ratings the network hoped for, though.

Then Sci Fi heard the buzz about the revived British sci-fi show *Doctor Who* and secured the rights to air the first season. The show did very well for the network—so well, in fact, that the network signed to run show's the second year (or "series," as the Brits say).

Ever since Sci Fi began running original programs, they've been content to air new episodes in two blocks of three or four months at a time with long periods of reruns or movies in between. After all, what self-respecting cable channel wants to burn off new programming against the "big" non-cable networks, which routinely knock the socks off cable ratings, especially during the "sweeps" periods when the "major" broadcast channels are much more readily available to viewers, especially those who don't pay for cable?

But in the last few months, Sci Fi made an interesting decision regarding *Galactica* that made some people pay attention.

Instead of continuing to air the series with *SG-1* and *Atlantis* on Friday nights, Sci Fi announced that *Galactica* would not begin running new episodes of its third season until October, after *SG-1* and *Atlantis* had aired their "summer of sci fi" episodes.

Speculation ran rampant that *Galactica* was going to jump to NBC prime time (especially since NBC has been desperately craving a successful prime-time show). That didn't prove to be the case.

Instead, Sci Fi is embarking on an ambitious attempt to challenge the broadcast networks. The channel announced that they would run new programming that runs close to year-round. Even many of the "major" broadcast channels don't do that.

When *SG-1* and *Atlantis* conclude airing the first half of their latest seasons, *Galactica* and *Doctor Who* will take over in late September and early October. Current word is that the remainder of the new *Stargate* seasons will return in March of 2007.

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The latter half of the second season of *Battlestar Galactica* will be available on DVD on September 19.

COMING EVENTS

AUGUST

August 26 Ready for our annual pool party? Let's meet at the Gaithersburg, Maryland, home of the parents of First Officer Abby Lindstrom. We'll gather at 4 p.m. for fun in the pool. At 5:00 p.m., we'll enjoy our dinner, then begin our meeting no later than 7:00 p.m. Be sure to get directions from the Insert in our Yahoo! Group.

SCIENCE TREK: Close to home ... concluded

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strike the planet as often as every millennium. What are we doing to protect ourselves? The University of Arizona-based Spacewatch program and similar programs around the world keep a look-out every night, scanning for near-Earth and Earth orbit-crossing comets and asteroids. For those fatalists reading this, the next known one to watch out for is due in our neighborhood in 2036. ■

Web Notes:

- <http://www.astro.umd.edu/openhouse/> (When the roof pulls back, it's literally an open house.);
- <http://www.csc.com/features/2004/14.shtml> (Greg Redfern, NASA Ambassador and Planetary Defender.);
- <http://www.wtopnews.com/?nid=78&sid=598700> (I've seen him, now you can hear him.);
- <http://geology.er.usgs.gov/eespteam/crater/> (The gumint's 2 cents.);

- <http://woodshole.er.usgs.gov/epubs/bolide/> (It's all about consequences.);
- <http://www.lpi.usra.edu/meetings/lpsc2005/pdf/1736.pdf> (The recent research.);
- http://members.tripod.com/Melissa_Umlor/writings/dino.html (Dinos don't live forever.);
- <http://www.astrobiology.com/extreme.html> (X-treme.);
- <http://www.unmannedspaceflight.com/lofiversion/index.php/t1670.html> (The Lichens Lived!);
- <http://pan-starrs.ifa.hawaii.edu/public/asteroid-threat/movies.html> (Killers on screen.);
- http://hometown.aol.com/___121b_k2ZzSe8zGxN+Irz3JtY/zW92xubQBQvT (All you needed to know.);
- <http://www.barringercrater.com> (If you can't see it in person, see it online.); and
- <http://spacewatch.lpl.arizona.edu/> (Space-Watch ... Keeping an Eye out for you.).

Second Officer Phil Margolies

WAYNE'S WORLDS: Sci Fi Channel ... concluded

Continued from page 5
That's quite a leap for a cable network. But it's not all that surprising when you consider that Sci Fi and NBC/Universal are used to taking risks. For example, when the Sci Fi Channel didn't have enough money to produce *DS9* alumni Rene Echeverria and Ira Behr's *The 4400*, they moved it over to another NBC/Universal channel, USA Network. The show, paired with *The Dead Zone*, has regularly helped USA take first place in the cable summer network ratings wars.

Then, too, the new show *Eureka* has helped Sci Fi Channel revive an unremarkable Tuesday night line-up by pairing it with reruns of the Showtime Network's *Dead Like Me* with Mandy Patinkin.

The question is, will this gamble pay off

for the Sci Fi Channel?

As a science-fiction fan, I have to say that I'd love nothing more than new sci-fi programming to turn on each Friday night after a busy week of work.

And as an admirer of many of the Sci Fi Channel's shows, including the *Stargate* franchise, *Eureka*, *Doctor Who* and *Galactica*, I'm thrilled to see them continue.

Recently, *SG-1* aired its 200th episode, titled "200," appropriately enough. However, the next week, they cancelled that show, leaving its future in doubt.

So, to the Sci Fi Channel, I say, "I'd love to see you revive *Farscape*, *The Invisible Man* and *The Chronicle*, among others, but I'm enjoying a lot of what you are giving us now." ■

Chief of Security Wayne Hall



Yes, Jack's back in the 200th episode of *Stargate SG-1*.