



Star Trek 11 has been getting a lot of publicity lately.

Star Trek 11 ends filming, beams into post-production

The latest *Star Trek* feature film was expected to conclude filming the end of last week. What's next? The folks behind the movie anticipate beginning post-production this week, still aiming for release on May 8, 2009, more than a year away.

The film got some unexpected publicity last week when a local traffic accident revealed the presence of the crew filming in the Bakersfield, California, area.

An unidentified site manager for the movie suffered moderate injuries following a head-on crash outside of a shooting location for the J.J. Abrams movie.

KERO, Channel 23 in Bakersfield, said the crash took place near Highway 119 and Enos Lane. According to the California Highway Patrol, the site manager was trying to turn onto a road where filming was set to take place, but instead crossed in front of oncoming traffic and hit a truck.

When the media investigated the accident, word of the previously secret filming location was made public.

The Bakersfield area is also the infamous hometown of Gabriel Koerner, who was featured in the documentaries *Trekkies* and *Trekkies 2*, and later became a special effects artist working on shows including *Battlestar Galactica*.

More publicity came when the actor who will be playing Hikaru Sulu added new fuel to the online decades-long debate over which is the better franchise, *Star Trek* or *Star Wars*.

John Cho, who considers himself a late-comer to *Star Trek*, told *Entertainment Tonight* the he finds *Trek* to be more "mature."

"When I was a kid, it was much easier to love something like *Star Wars* right off the bat," he said, "with its lightsabers and fighting and stuff."

"On the other hand, *Star Trek* was much more mature than that. I became a *Star Trek* fan because it was on late, and I would catch it in reruns here and there," Cho said. "It is something that I appreciate more every year because it's very thoughtful and meditative."

Of course, anyone playing Sulu would want to meet with George Takei to get advice.

"I wrote George a letter before we started filming," said Cho, "and I said 'I'd like to take you out to lunch and talk a little bit' and we did. He said 'yes,' and we had a great time."

"I remember asking George, 'Just what am I in for, is it crazy?' His response was just classic George Takei because he's so witty and so kind. He said 'Hey, listen—they're going to be calling me the guy who played the old John Cho pretty soon, so don't worry about it, kid! He's just the greatest guy in the world.'" ■

It's the April club meeting at the Whites' house

The next meeting of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek and Science-Fiction Club* will be held on Saturday, April 19, at the Laurel, Maryland, home of Starfleet Intelligence Officer Annie White and Chief of Computer Operations John White.

We'll get together to decide what to do for dinner around 5:00 p.m., followed by our club

meeting, which will start at 7:00 p.m.

We'll discuss what fellow club members have been up to, talk about the upcoming conventions as well as discuss the latest news about *Star Trek* and other sci-fi television shows and feature films.

For directions, please check out this month's Insert. ■

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Captain Randy Hall's column will return next month.

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Check out our club website: www.uschesapeake.org

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REFLECTIONS: *Battlestar Galactica*, good?

There are two questions that have plagued genre fans since the dawning of time. (For genre fans, the dawn of time would be about 1895—that's when H. G. Wells wrote *The Time Machine*.) "What is science fiction?" and what is GOOD science fiction?" The answer to the first question is, "fictional literature based on science." Some of you may let out a distinct "duh," but you'd be surprised how many people get THAT one wrong.

Vampires are NOT science fiction. Werewolves are NOT science fiction. Elves are NOT science fiction. *Lord of the Rings* is NOT science fiction. They are things to enjoy, but they are different genres, and there are some people who want these genres combined. They call it "speculative fiction." I call it a cheap ploy to include fantasy in the already respected field of science fiction.

What is GOOD science fiction? *There's* the question. Needless to say, this has been a hotly debated topic for some years now. Some people will tell you anything *Star Trek* is good science fiction. Some people will tell you anything BUT *Star Trek* is good science fiction. Some people will tell you that *Babylon 5* was the only TRUE science fiction on television. Most people will disagree with that. No one seems to know. The purist will tell you most of the genre television shows are not because they don't use enough science. I wonder how the purists feel about *Eureka*. There's a lot of science—in fact, it is a town full of science.

Science fiction is supposed to be about wonder, about speculation and what if. I have no problem with that. My question is: On television, is that entertainment? The reason the original *Star Trek* was bought in the first place was because Lucille Ball did not understand any of the science in the pilot she saw, but she understood the drama. Without the "human condition," most science-fiction

shows would go right over the heads of the average viewer.

Drama is what fuels the soul. Drama is what keeps people watching. Drama is what brings most people back. The "human condition" is the thing that most people understand.

What brought me to this area of interest is the recent airing of a special on Sci-Fi Channel entitled: *How Battlestar Galactica Changed Pop Culture*. Now, I like *Galactica* a lot (although I did find the episodes near the end of last season to be a bit on the boring side), but when did it change pop culture? I never hear any fans outside of genre fans talking about the show. Sure, it's graced the cover of *Time* magazine, been praised in the pages of *Rolling Stone*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *New York Newsday* and *National Review* (Do you get the feeling it's a New York thing?), but this press has NOT transformed into viewers.

As I said, I love the show, but I think Sci-Fi doth protest too much. Outside of genre events and the press, I NEVER hear anyone discussing the program. A good friend of mine is a mundane ("genre ignorant"), and he has discovered *The 4400*. He is constantly bugging me to borrow my DVDs of the show's first two seasons. I consented and asked him if he wanted to check out *Battlestar Galactica* as well. His expression was one of total undue concern. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Eh, I don't think so."

Now don't get me wrong. I don't base my findings and opinions solely based on my friend, but that is just an example of the reaction I get when I bring up this show to anyone of the mundane persuasion—this look of "Why would I waste my time watching that?" Unfortunately, it is the exact same look I used to get when I asked people about watching *Babylon 5* except I used to ask it to genre fans. Whereas I was never a fan of *Babylon 5* (I did

watch every single episode of that God-awful show!), I like *Galactica*, and it bothers me that the show isn't more popular than it is.

Battlestar Galactica is a great show. It is great drama, but is it good science fiction? That is the question we will dive into next frakking month. ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard



Above: A promotional poster for the final season of *Battlestar Galactica* taken as the cast gathers for a leisurely lunch during filming.

SCIENCE TREK: Hodgkin's explains it all

Or does it?

How many times have you been on an away mission when someone comments on how remarkably similar those twelve-legged beetles are to the winged *tsena* beetles of Reticula Prime? Then that wise-ass in Security who doesn't know the difference between the business and butt ends of a phaser waves his hand and attributes it to "Hodgkin's Law of Parallel Planet Development."

The Man

Courtesy of Memory Alpha, the *Trek* wiki, and the *Enterprise* episode, "Strange New World," we know a little bit about the man himself. A.E. Hodgkin lived—er, *will* live around the beginning of the 22nd Century. On an expedition to Loracus Prime, Hodgkin discovers a plethora of termite-like creatures that are remarkably similar to those on Earth, Vulcan and other Class M worlds. Like Darwin at the Galapagos Islands, he constructs a theory to explain the evidence.

The Law

Simply put (by Memory Alpha): "The theory was that similar planets with similar environments and similar populations tended to gravitate toward similar biological developments over time." Later on, the theory came to apply not only to biology, but also sociology and societies. Witness the Classic *Trek* episodes "Bread and Circuses," "The Omega Glory" and "Miri."

Makes sense, at least in science fiction. It also explains why when they go where "no one" has ever gone before, everybody speaks English (when you don't see Kirk with a Universal Translator in hand).

In the real world, of course, the reason is self-evident, so let me explain. Anyone know of a "real" alien playing one on TV or a show filmed on location on another world? Earth-based production run by humans requires human actors filmed on location at, say, the Vasquez rocks.

Within the world of the show, of course, it's supposed to make sense (suspend our disbelief and all that). Hence, Dr. Hodgkin and his eponymous law ... which really should be called a theory since, in science, a law is only a theory that has not been disproven despite countless attempts.

Let's take it from the top: Similar biologies of life evolving on different worlds under

different but similar environmental conditions. The first question is, how similar and how different? Think about the factors that went into life on Earth—location in the galaxy, composition of the pre-solar system interstellar environment, location in the "zone of life" (distance from the sun), formation of the planet, chance meteorite and asteroid strikes, and these days, the greenhouse effect. Now, on another world in another solar system, we may have a similar set of circumstances, but are they similar enough to drive evolution along the same lines?

The real answer is: Who knows? We can theorize and even make (educated) guesses based on remote research, but until we actual travel to these distant worlds—or they come here—we can't truly know.

The next topic is similar cultural developments on worlds light-years apart. If the biological aspects of the Law were an elephant pill, this one is the size of planet. Factors to consider include not only environmental and climate conditions, but also the individual and collective actions of people across hundreds of millennia. To me, at least, while the biological similarity exists in the realm of the possible, the sociological aspects of the Law are, as Vizzini has said, "Inconceivable!"

As a footnote to this discussion, *Star Trek* offers another explanation, discovered centuries after A.E. Hodgkin: Ancient humanoids seeded the galaxy with DNA codes to drive the development, over billions of years, of humanoid species. (Then there are the Preservers, who were/are/will be their descendents.)

In the end, we don't know, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try to figure it out. ■

Web Notes:

- http://memory-alpha.org/en/wiki/A.E._Hodgkin: The Man;
- http://memory-alpha.org/en/wiki/Hodgkin's_Law_of_Parallel_Planetary_Development: The Law; and
- <http://memory-alpha.org/en/wiki/Preservers>: The Preservers, duh.

Second Officer Phil Margolies



Doctor McCoy (left) discusses Hodgkin's Law of Parallel Development on television with an unhappy fan during Classic *Trek*'s "Bread and Circuses."

ART CREDITS:

startrek.com 1, 3
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COMING EVENTS

APRIL

April 19 The next meeting will be on Saturday, April 19, at the Laurel, Maryland, home of Starfleet Intelligence Officer Annie White and Chief of Computer Operations John White!

WAYNE'S WORLDS: The right to retcon

In a recent interview on SyFy Portal, *Battlestar Galactica* writer David Weddle (also of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* fame) mentioned that the writing team from the show had gone back and taken a second look at episodes focusing on one of their most popular characters, Starbuck. They noticed something they wanted to change, so they did it.

"We went back and screened the scenes from 'Valley of Darkness' and noticed the mandala that she had painted on her apartment wall," Weddle said. "That gave us the idea to put it on the temple and to build it into her backstory in 'Maelstrom.'"

As Michael Hinman, author of the article, noted, "the writing team that includes Weddle and partner in crime Bradley Thompson have been utilizing the technique of retroactive continuity, or as fans like to call it, the retcon."

In other words, they thought of something they liked better, so they went with it.

"The truth is, nothing's nailed down until the final episode is written, shot and edited," said Weddle, who was one of the writers of "He That Believeth In Me," the premiere episode of the program's fourth and final season.

I've been rather intrigued by the reaction of some fans to this. A number seem to think that Weddle and the other writers "admitted that they can only write 'by the seat of their pants,' without any idea where they are going," as one online fan stated.

"It's disrespecting the viewers when a show

changes direction in mid-stream," wrote another. "If they don't know where they will end up, how can we ever trust them?"

As a writer/editor myself, I find all this amusing. Anyone who has written or edited for a living/professionally knows it is *extremely* rare that a first draft sails through the review process with no changes.

Then, too, after a writer has left a project for a period of time and returned to it, he or she might see things from a different perspective and discover a more dramatic or, dare I say it, a *better* way to do something.

The creative process is an ongoing and dynamic one, and anyone who believes that the gold that drips from his or her pen or keyboard should never be altered needs a serious reality check.

In another part of the article, Hinman said, "Finding a retcon isn't easy because viewers typically don't know what was planned out ahead of time, and what was simply picked up from previous episodes to run with."

So, if Mr. Weddle hadn't said anything, it's likely that very few people (if any) would ever have noticed the change. Should he have kept this to himself? He would have been thought much smarter by some.

In my opinion, it's all about telling good stories. Whether one has a great idea in the first hour, three weeks later or just yesterday makes no difference as long as the end result is a quality, entertaining tale. ■

Chief of Security Wayne Hall

PHASERS ON FUN: Sev Trek



David Weddle from *Battlestar Galactica*