



Trek XI is top film of 2009, exceeding expectations

It's always good to be a fan of *Star Trek*, but this is a particularly great time to like the franchise.

Now the biggest movie of 2009, *Star Trek* brought in \$5.6 million at the box office over the weekend of June 13-15, beating out *Terminator: Salvation*, *Drag Me To Hell* and *Angels & Demons*.

It almost surpassed the premiere of the new Eddie Murphy film *Imagine That*, which is considered by industry insiders to be a failure. That movie pulled in just \$100,000 more than *Star Trek* and was well behind the \$9.2 million from *Land of the Lost* that held the No. 5 place.

The Hangover, in its second week of release, earned \$33.4 million to take the top spot.

However, it seems that the Disney/Pixar film *Up* will be the film that will topple *Star Trek's* status as the biggest box office draw of the year. The movie, which includes the voices of Ed Asner and *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* villain actor Christopher Plummer, earned another \$30.5 million at the box office,

bringing its total to \$187.2 million. It probably will overtake the \$232.1 million *Star Trek* has earned so far in July.

While *Star Trek* has led the box office almost from its third week, it was never expected to be the top film of the year in terms of box office. However, the latest film from J. J. Abrams, and the eleventh in the franchise, has far exceeded money expectations by Paramount and has become one of the best reviewed films of the year, getting a 95 percent rating by Rotten Tomatoes.

The studio greenlit a sequel a month before the movie opened, so look for another voyage of the *Starship Enterprise* sometime in the future.

In fact, the film's success is translating into other areas. "The *Star Trek* line is performing well and will continue in all key accounts this fall and into 2010," said Playmates Vice President of Marketing Paul Fish. "The consumers' scale of choice appears to be the 3.75-inch figures," he said, admitting he is a fan of *Star Trek Enterprise*. "So what do I know?" ■

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The June club meeting is at the Whites' house

The next meeting of the U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek and Science-Fiction Club will be held on Saturday, June 20, at the Laurel, Maryland, home of Starfleet Intelligence Officer Annie White and Chief of Computer Operations John White.

We'll get together for dinner at 5:00 p.m. Our club meeting will start no later

than 7:00 p.m.

During this month's meeting, we'll talk about what fellow club members have been up to and discuss the latest *Star Trek* movie and other sci-fi television shows and feature films.

For directions, get the month's Insert in our Yahoo! Group. ■

CAPTAIN'S LOG: *Trek XI* Q&A

The past month has sure been a busy time for us fans of *Star Trek*. *Trek XI* has done what many people thought was impossible: bring in the Trekkies and reach out to a broader audience.

As I write this, the movie has become



Left: Leonard Nimoy as Spock, William Shatner as Kirk. Right: Zachary Quinto as Spock, Christopher Pine as Kirk.

the biggest box office draw so far this year at more than \$250 million domestically and another \$100 million in foreign

theaters. Even before the film was released, Paramount gave the official go-ahead for *Star Trek XII*.

Though I've enjoyed seeing the movie three times (so far), I notice that some things aren't fully explained on the screen. Thankfully, that hasn't kept millions of people from paying their hard-earned quatloos to enjoy the film. Still, I thought I'd go over some questions that are explained in the *Star Trek Countdown* comic trade paperback and the novelization by Alan Dean Foster of the movie. (Sorry, Phil. The writing bug just hits once in a while.)

Q: Why does Nero hate Spock and the Federation so much?

A: In *Countdown*, Nero was depicted as one of the few Romulans who believed Spock's dire warnings of planetary disaster, not unlike Jor-El in the Superman saga. Nero even went so far as to use his ship to take Spock to Vulcan to get help, but the highest council on the planet dismissed the concept by noting that Spock was now a full-fledged citizen of Romulus. Not very logical, I thought.

While Spock got help from some friends, including Data—who was now captain of the *Enterprise E*—and Picard, who was then an ambassador to Vulcan (Poor Kirk wasted his breath in *Generations* telling Jean-Luc to stay in the captain's chair where he could make a difference.), the supernova started growing at a much faster rate than expected. Nero took

his ship and tried to get back to his home and save his wife and family. Instead, he got to watch the planet and his family be consumed by fire.

Mere minutes later, Federation ships appeared, offering medical help. Still driven by loss and rage, Nero then declared war on the Federation, and beamed explosives to every Starfleet vessel in the area, destroying them.

Q: Why did Nero have a ship that could burrow its way into the core of a planet?

A: *Countdown* also states that Nero was a miner who had that kind of equipment on hand. In addition, the *Narada* found a weapons arsenal the Romulans had been building for some time and took those weapons in his quest to destroy Spock and the Federation.

Also just after the destruction of the planet, Spock arrived in a top-of-the-line starship named the Jellyfish because the top and bottom parts rotated differently. He was able to bring "red matter" to shoot into the center of the phenomenon, which caused the supernova to collapse on itself. Nero blamed Spock and the Federation for allowing his planet to die and then arrive to help the situation moments after his world was destroyed.

Q. Why were all the Romulans shaving their heads and putting tattoos on their bodies?

A. According to the novelization, most Romulans were pretty much the way we remember them, but Nero and his crew invoked an old tradition that said people who were seeking revenge were to shave their heads and place tattoos calling for vengeance against those who hurt them.

Q: What was up with Nero hanging around 25 years waiting for Spock to emerge? He had superior weaponry that could beat anything in Classic *Trek*?

A: This is one of the weakest moments of the film. There's a rumor going around

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SCIENCE *TREK*: The science of *Star Trek* (the film)

If you haven't seen the new *Star Trek* movie, finish reading this sentence and then go read Randy's column again—I'm sure he's not going to talk about the movie this month. (Remember to come back and read *Science Trek* after you've seen the film.)

Now that they're gone, the rest of us can enjoy this month's article.

I'm sure others will dissect the filmatic or motion picturesque aspects of the J. J. Abrams *Trek* extravaganza. In this column, of course, we look at the movie from a science and technical perspective.

Of supernovas, black holes, and red matter

Let me get this straight: The Federation, or at least Spock, knows that a star "near" Romulus is going supernova, and the Romulans with all their secretive intelligence and scientific knowledge don't believe him. So, Spock goes all the way back to Vulcan to get a special ship and some "red matter" to create an artificial black hole that's supposed to swallow the blast and protect Romulus. I guess this is the *fiction* part of *science fiction*.

Supernovas can expand at relativistic speeds; at least the initial shock wave and gases, but unless the star is within a couple of light years of Romulus, the Romulans would get a warning from an initial neutrino wave long (hours, days, weeks?) before the main blast wave arrives. In other words, they would have enough warning to get more than one ship off the planet.

I'm going to skip the ins and outs of how "red matter" creates a black hole, but my question for Spock is: What happens after you're done with the black hole? Are you going to leave it there to grow and swallow, say, Romulus some day?

And, oh yeah, what about the radiation from the supernova that bypasses the

black hole, or is bent around the gravity well of the black hole (a massive gravitational lens) and heads toward Romulus anyway? Logically, you should have had plenty of time to think about these things on your way to and from Vulcan, you pointy eared—[Ed. Be nice, Phil. (Aw. That was my editorial insert, not Wayne's.)]

Let's not even get into the "lightning storm" in outer space.

I do have to say Nero had a pretty advanced drill to dig some 6,000+ kilometers into the heart of Vulcan and not have his hole collapse from the geologic pressure from the surrounding material. Not to mention, magma.

Free falling and hitting nickels on Neptune from behind the sun

I'm glad they finally had a scene of Kirk doing the ultimate HALO jump onto a dangling platform. BUT, well, let's say two out of three ain't bad, especially at those velocities. Still, I'd like to see *Myth-Busters* try it before I declare it feasible even for the future.

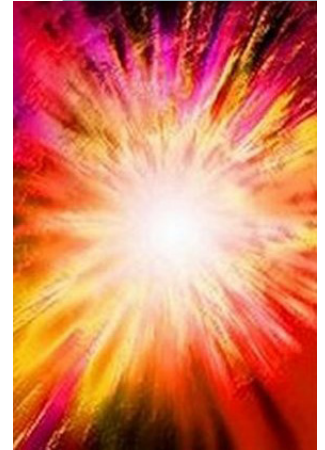
As much as I love the tribute to *STIV* with old Spock telling Scotty how he's going to solve the beam-them-onto-a-ship-at-warp-many-light-years-away problem, I'm not thinking the chance of success is smaller than [censored].

And what about that black hole where the *Narada* was near our solar system at the end? Who's going to clean that up?

And we didn't even have to get into a cadet being promoted to captain after one mission he wasn't even supposed to be on.

(In case you think I liked nothing about the movie, I love the McCoy parts, especially the first time we meet him and when he smuggles Kirk onto the *Enterprise*. And yes, Lorenzo, Romulans, red matter, and quantum singularities does make sense.)

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ART CREDITS:
startrekmovie.com 1, 2, 6,
Insert front,
Insert back
images.google.com
3, 4, 5

REFLECTIONS: From Herc to Kirk

Last month, I elaborated on the reluctant and dysfunctional crew of the *Andromeda Ascendant*. At the time, the idea of bringing together such a diverse and unsavory group and making them the crew was both unique and rather ground-breaking.

Usually, a crew is carefully selected from the finest and the best to work together like a well oiled machine, blah, blah, wolf, wolf It doesn't work that way in real life. *Andromeda's* crew was MUCH more like real life.

Not only did they constantly face the challenge of keeping such different personalities happy, or functioning as a unit, they accomplished the difficult task of KEEPING them. *Firefly* attempted this, but failed miserably. I was always scratching my head and wondering, "Why are these people still on the ship and part of the crew?!" It didn't make sense that most of them would stay. *Andromeda* addressed this and gave everyone a legitimate reason for being there.

Everyone, except Harper, Trance and Rev Bem was after that ship. They all felt that if they hung around long enough, *Andromeda* would be theirs. With a High Guard vessel, Beka could bring a little dignity and respect to her much-maligned family name. She could sail through the cosmos with her chest stuck out and head held high, not sneaking in the back way as she usually did. Besides, with a ship as big as *Andromeda*, she could smuggle 100 times more merchandise than she could on the *Maru*.

Tyr, with a High Guard ship, could become the scourge of the galaxy. Not only could he exact revenge on the Nietzscheans who wiped out the Kodiak Pride, but he could also kill ALL of his enemies. Knowing Tyr, that had to be a large number. He'd need a ship with the *Andromeda's* firepower to fend them all off. The Nova bombs alone had Tyr near orgasmic the entire first season.

I could understand why THIS crew stayed together; I could not understand why the crew of the *Serenity* was still around. The difference could be found at the top. In order to keep the respect and loyalty (somewhat) of such diverse personalities, the person in charge must have the ability (or weakness, as Tyr would say) to see beyond his crew's varied differences and deficiencies. You would need a wide-eyed optimist with the ability to not only see, but bring out the best in everyone involved. You'd need a captain with the strength of Hercules (pun intended), the understanding of a saint and the patience of Job. You'd need Dylan Hunt.

Dylan Hunt, decorated High Guard officer with a good service record. He was not the best officer; he had a good service record, not great, but he was more than adequate. When the entire Systems Commonwealth was attacked and decimated, Dylan didn't survive because of his superior ability and skill. He survived because he was lucky.

The *Andromeda Ascendant* just happened to be near the edge of a black hole when he was betrayed by his Nietzschean first officer. When the ship drifted into the black hole's event horizon, it was frozen in time. Which, in itself, was a superb bit of pure science. Time moves slower the closer you get to a black hole's core, which is why he was still around 300 years later to be rescued for salvage by the *Eureka Maru*.

Having lost everyone (his fiancé, Sara Riley) and everything that mattered to him (the entire Systems Commonwealth), Dylan set out with a new purpose, determined to restore the Systems Commonwealth to its former glory. Crazy? Yes. Impossible? Maybe. Certifiable? Absolutely, but these are the things a wide-eyed optimist would do to keep himself from drowning in despair and wallowing in self pity. He found a purpose, a *raison d'être*.

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Kevin Sorbo played Captain Dylan Hunt in Gene Roddenberry's *Andromeda*.

WAYNE'S WORLDS: Let's get digital!

Well, the big transition from analog to digital has finally taken place. How does it look so far?

This time, the date came with very little fanfare. And I don't think many people actually bought their digital converter boxes ... at least, I haven't seen many people carrying them out of the stores when I've been there.

The whole point of delaying this was so everyone would be ready. I still don't think that happened.

Worse yet, there are problems with the digital boxes. For example, here in the D.C. area, WJLA Channel 7 isn't appearing on some of the boxes (including mine). Add to that, I couldn't get the local Fox TV affiliate, Channel 5, on my analog television. I still can't get it with the digital box.

The interesting thing to me was that the Sweeps weeks from February were switched to March, leaving only one month between two Sweeps periods. Like last year, which was severely impacted by the writers' strike, this season has felt disjointed—I could never quite be sure when a program was going to run a new

episode or when it was going to be a rerun. And it was much harder even than a usual television season to figure that out.

All these things, while apparently small, are just piling on to a medium that continues to decline. What television desperately needs is a "normal" or even a "great" year to bring those who discovered they could live without their TVs to come back and park their backsides in front of the tube. But I don't see that happening any time soon.

This is especially bad news for science-fiction fans. Since sci-fi shows are expensive, we're much less likely to see new SF programs take to the airwaves (or boxwaves) in the coming years. The costs won't be justified by the size of the audience, and that's going to mean trouble.

I continue to have one television hooked up to digital cable, but with the other I use an antenna/converter box just in case my cable drops out, which has been known to happen just when I want it most.

Technology has changed so much of our lives, now it is changing what we view. ■

Chief of Security Wayne Hall

REFLECTIONS: From Herc to Kirk (concluded)

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To the common, rational human being, the odds would seem insurmountable. To a wide-eyed optimist, the universe is half full. Any task can be completed with hard work and good old-fashioned obsession. The universe awaits the optimist.

In the process, Captain Hunt managed to make a few enemies. The Nietzschean Drago-Kazov Pride was probably the most dangerous. Other prides, Sabra and Jaguar, regarded him with amusement and pity, much like Tyr at first. The Than Hegemony, a tough insectoid race that was once a member of the Commonwealth, considered him with little to no interest and was uninterested in a new

Commonwealth.

This phased Dylan not. Not the general disinterest from others for his mission. Not Tyr's constant belittling of his "pipe dream" and begging him to take the universe by force. Not the encounters with several dysfunctional remnants of the old High Guard. Not even the discovery of the consequences of mistakes made by the Commonwealth, the High Guard and even himself 300 years earlier.

Dylan persevered. Restoring the Commonwealth was his mission. He was like a pit bull with the leg of a mailman; he wouldn't let go. He couldn't let go. What else did he have?

Next month: The episode guide. ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard



If you ain't got one of these, you're getting snow on your TV now.

COMING EVENTS

JUNE

June 20 It's summer time, and the living is fine! Let's get together and talk for our June meeting! We'll gather at the Whites' house in Laurel, Maryland, at 5 to order our dinner, followed by our monthly meeting starting no later than 7 p.m.

CAPTAIN'S LOG: *Trek XI* Q&A (concluded)

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that a scene showing Nero being captured by the Klingons soon after their arrival at that point in the time stream ended up on the cutting room floor, and it took his crew more than two decades to get him out. Not a very good use of superior technology, if you ask me, though it might be better than spending more than two decades waiting for one ship to come out.

Also, IDW Publishing (which produced the *Countdown* series and trade paperback) has announced they will produce a series that will delve more into Nero's actions, which hopefully will deal with this issue.

Q. After the Kobiyashi Maru sequence, Kirk was put on trial for reprogramming the simulation so he could beat it. Why was everyone then so anxious to promote him right from a cadet to a captain of the fleet's flagship?

A. Both in the movie and in the novelization, the time between fighting Nero and Kirk's promotion wasn't specified. My thought is that Kirk's quick jump up the ladder was part of a larger attempt to

get their fleet back up to snuff.

The novelization has an interesting section that Kirk did indeed "receive a commendation for original thinking." That recommendation came from the new admiral, Christopher Pike.

And I'm a huge Kirk fan, but even I winced when a room full of Starfleet cadets gave hearty applause for James T. I realize they wanted everyone in place for a follow-up, but I would have had Kirk being shuttled back to Starfleet by a fellow cadet. "Do you think we'll ever see that ship again?" Kirk would look out the window, which would have an image of the starship, and say: "I don't know about that. I have a feeling we'll see her again."

The only thing about the film that annoyed me was the fact that the IMAX theaters dumped the top movie of the year to show *Night at the Museum II*. Sigh. I know all that was put together way in advance of *Trek XI* with no idea that it would hit theaters at warp speed.

That reminds me: It's way past time for me to go see it again. Maybe this weekend! ■

Captain Randy Hall

SCIENCE TREK: The science of *Star Trek* ... (concluded)

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I have to put this one reference up here because it's a far longer scientific dissection of the movie from someone who says I *loved* it (italics original): <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/badastronomy/2009/05/08/ba-review-star-trek/> ■

Second Officer Phil Margolies

Web Notes:

• http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_

Trek_ (film) (It's all here if you can believe it.);

- <http://heasarc.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/snr.html> (Super and pretty good novas);
- <http://cosmology.berkeley.edu/Education/Hfaq.html> (Remember to get the answers before you reach the event horizon.); and
- <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090508184706AAQ2nkC> (Yahoo! has all the answers.).



It's a new *Enterprise* in the *Star Trek* film.