

Publication of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake*
Star Trek and Science-Fiction Club
December, 2009

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COMSTAR

Happy holidays! It's time for the December club meeting/party!

Let's celebrate the season as only the crew of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek* and Science-Fiction Club can do on Saturday night, December 19, for what has long been one of our most popular and enjoyable events of the entire year!

The meeting will be held at the Potomac, Maryland, home of Chief Operations Officer Ann Harding.

We'll kick off the holiday festivities with our dinner at 5:00 p.m., which is again being coordinated this year by Second Officer Phil Margolies.

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard will be cooking turkey and some veggies for club members to enjoy, so be sure to come hungry and bring plenty of food to share with the rest of the crew.

At 7:00 p.m., we'll

start our monthly business meeting, which will include the latest updates on member activities and finding out the most recent news in *Star Trek* and other science-fiction movies and television.

We'll also be talking about other conventions that will take place over the next year, including the Farpoint and Shore Leave events during 2009.

At some point during the evening, we'll participate in our annual gift exchange. Be sure to bring at least one wrapped science-fiction-related gift costing no more than \$20-25. It's always fun to see what the creative minds in our group bring to trade with or steal from other club members.

For directions to the meeting and party, check out the front page of this month's Insert in our club's Yahoo! Group! ■

CAPTAIN'S LOG: "Blood and Fire," Parts 1 and 2

David Gerrold is best known for creating and introducing those cute, furry tribbles, but his latest contribution to the *Star Trek* universe is vastly different: co-writing and directing the *Phase II* two-parter entitled "Blood and Fire."

While the Classic *Trek* episode "The Trouble With Tribbles" dealt with purring little animals, Gerrold's latest work focuses on Regulan bloodworms, ugly little slugs that can suck all the blood out of a human body and possibly trigger a war between the Federation and the Klingons.

In addition, "Blood" features a plotline regarding a same-sex romance between Ensign Peter Kirk (Captain Kirk's nephew, played by

Bobby Rice) and Lieutenant Alex Freeman (Evan Fowler).

That might sound ripped from today's headlines, but both stories were actually adapted by Carlos Pedraza from a script of the same name Gerrold wrote more than 20 years ago for *The Next Generation* as an allegory for the AIDS epidemic. It was deemed too controversial and never produced ... until now.

Part 1 got underway with the *Enterprise*, badly damaged after a shootout with a Klingon battle cruiser, limping to the rescue in response to a distress call from a research vessel called the *U.S.S. Copernicus*.

When Captain Kirk (still played by James Cawley) and company arrived at the scene, they found the vessel adrift and hours away from slipping into an explosive stream of solar energy. As if that weren't bad enough, the crew had apparently already been killed.

To sort out the situation, the captain picked a boarding party led by Spock (played in this adventure by Ben Tolpin) but obviously without his nephew, who fumed that he would have to seek assignment to another starship if the crew believed he was receiving preferential treatment.

The security officer had another reason to talk with his uncle: He wanted the captain to perform the marriage ceremony between himself and Freeman. That led to one of the most entertaining scenes in the program, as Kirk wondered aloud if he was the only one who didn't know about his nephew's romance. Spock's reaction was classic: "Mister Scott has been quite busy lately."

The captain then asked Peter to join Freeman and the others in the boarding party, which beamed over to the *Copernicus* and found a body in the captain's chair that was drained of all blood. The group was suddenly attacked by Regulan bloodworms (or plasmacytes, if you prefer), which are so quick and lethal that Starfleet demands the immediate destruction of any ship infested by them.

Part 1 ended with the others in the boarding party facing another onslaught of bloodworms, and Part 2 began with Scotty (Charles Root) beaming the group inside a force field elsewhere on the *Copernicus*, where they found several crew members still alive.

Also, Doctor Jenna Yar (Denise Crosby) and Federation medical researcher Michael Blodgett (Bill Blair) were there, and they claimed to have found a "cure" for the plasmacytes.

As Doctor McCoy (John Kelley) examined the research, the situation grew more complicated when Captain Kargh (played by John Carrigan) and his Klingon battle cruiser arrived on the scene. Kargh threatened to destroy the infested starship if Kirk didn't.

Bones determined that everyone on the *Copernicus* could be beamed over safely if they quickly received a total transfusion of blood. Despite the fact that the force field around the survivors was beginning to fail, he transported there to oversee the operation himself.

When Spock, Peter Kirk and Alex Freeman were left to return to the *Enterprise*
continued on page 5



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SCIENCE *TREK*: The end of the world as we know it

Everything changes. That's the dirty little secret, the only constant in the whole world. Anyone tells you differently, they're selling something.

So what does it all mean? (Let me know when you figure it out, 'cause I sure as H-E-Double Toothpicks don't know.)

I'll tell you one thing it means: *COM-STAR* will never be the same. Maybe you'll see this column next time *COM-STAR* comes out, maybe you won't. Maybe you don't even care (specifically talking about you people who aren't reading this sentence much less this column or even this newsletter, so you won't even know that I'm talking about you. You know who you are.)

Tired enough of the intro material? Me, too.

I saw a movie recently that I didn't think I'd be seeing: *2012*. If you don't know the plot, I'll spoil it for you right here and now. Earth gets rebooted, lots of people die, the protagonists live and save the day.

Now, I'm not going to review the film. I'll leave that to those who write opinion columns. This is a science (as well as technology) column, so we'll focus on those aspects of the film. One metafilmic technology aspect before we dive into the world within the celluloid: The special effects were *awesome*.

Do you need to plan for New Year's Eve 2012?

I've got to give kudos to any film that makes one of the heroes a GS-14 federal researcher in the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Of course, he ends up pretty wrong about the timing of a lot of things. Too bad there's only one geologist in the entire U.S. Federal Government (not to mention the country). On the other hand, he gets to travel to India. Probably had to take annual leave.

Following the format we used last month (if you'll recall), here are some

quick hit thoughts on the science and technology in the movie:

- Our intrepid gov't scientist travels to see his buddy in India to learn of a great increase in solar neutrinos. Apparently, it wasn't found by the neutrino detectors in the U.S., Canada and Japan.

- The surface of the Earth rips apart, and the entire surface shifts by thousands of miles, but apparently most of the shifts are mid-tectonic plate (though California seems to slide into the Pacific at the San Andreas Fault). That's like a pair of pants getting ripped off of Lorenzo and not splitting at the seams, but at the tear lines.

- Let's see, Yellowstone explodes, and the gases don't seem to kill our heroes, nor the pyroclastic flow, which is apparently far slower than a Winebago. Not to even mention the shock wave. And if that weren't bad enough, apparently their little airplane doesn't mind its engines getting full of debris from a newly born volcano.

- (Warning: Political Science Bullet Point) —The U.S. president organizes the salvation of the world, and the heads of all the other G-8 (Note: The G-8 became the G-20 in 2009) all just *fall in line!*? Folks, we've stepped from science fiction to fantasy.

- California slips into the sea, and it's a normal rush hour in D.C.?

- My favorite: Our heroes learn that the tsunami heading for India and the Himalayas is 1,500 meters high! Horror of horrors! Until you do the math and realize that's about 4,921 feet. Pretty high, you say, but then again, Everest rises to just over 29,000 feet. Looks like somebody missed a decimal place.

That's it for this month, this year, and maybe this column forever. I'd like to thank the Academy (Starfleet), George

continued on page 6



ART CREDITS:
Dynamic Graphics 1
startreknewvoyages.com 2, 5
images.google.com
3, 4,
Insert front,
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candorville.com 6

REFLECTIONS: Lightning strikes again—4

We continue to chronicle the amazing inaugural season of *Gene Roddenberry's Andromeda*. I'm still amazed by the ease and poise *Andromeda* demonstrated in its first run. Most programs start off rather shaky since the writers are still trying to find the show's voice, but *Andromeda* hit the ground running and never looked back. This can be credited to Robert Hewitt Wolfe and his incredible writing staff. It was obvious from the start that the writers had a plan and were not just writing by the seat of their pants.

"Angel Dark, Demon Bright"—Robert Hewitt Wolfe

During an effort to teach Trance Gemini how to pilot the slipstream, she inadvertently(?) throws the ship back in time 300 years, two days before the "Battle of Witchhead," the final clash of the Nietzschean rebellion.

It is extremely rare in television, film or any type of print media that an episode or story is great in the first reading/viewing and even greater the second time around. I knew this was a great episode the first time I saw it, but I really didn't realize how great it was until I saw the re-run! Upon a second viewing, I was totally blown away.

Commonwealth legend had it that one ship stood tall against 500 Nietzschean ships and won. Nietzschean legend has it that one ship, piloted by the Angel of Death, destroyed 100 ships. The reality of the situation is that the *Andromeda Ascendant* destroyed 1,000 Nietzschean ships lying in wait to ambush the Commonwealth fleet. This was a pivotal moment in Commonwealth history, and *Andromeda* was thrown smack dab in the middle of it. Coincidence?

Not at all! Upon a second viewing, I realized that once Trance piloted the ship back in time, there was a curious smile on her face as she got out of the slipstream chair. At first, I thought this was a case of a pre-destined paradox, but then I realized

that it was done on purpose. Trance deliberately brought them back in time for the battle, which she knew the *Andromeda* was supposed to win.

Trance made sure everyone played their part: Harper's building of an explosive device that ended up killing 100,000 Nietzscheans, talking Tyr out of stealing the *Maru* and joining the Nietzschean fleet, and making sure that Dylan became the "Angel of Death." Brilliant episode.

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"The Ties That Bind"—Ethlie Ann Vare
Andromeda saves a Wayist ship that has survived an attack. The pilot turns out to be Beka's scoundrel brother.

In this episode, we get to delve deeper into Beka's past. Rapheal Valentine is a swindler, con man and thief, and he's Beka's brother. Meanwhile, an unknown attacker (first seen in the episode "D Minus Zero") fires on the *Andromeda*, and a Wayist Monk, Sym Causa, is not what he seems.

We also have a group called the "Restors," an intergalactic organization of environmentalists who seek to halt all slipstream travel in the universe. They're space huggers who also inhabit the mystery ship that's been trailing and attacking the *Andromeda*. Then we discover that Raph is also working for the FTA, the Free Trade Association, which sees the "Restors" as a threat.

A good episode; not great, but good, and it lays the seeds for several stories to come.

Rating: ★ ★ ★ -1/2.

"Banks of the Lethe"—Zack Stentz/
Ashley Edward Miller

A signal from the past brings Dylan and the *Andromeda* back to the black hole that held him prisoner only to find that the message is 300 years old and from Dylan's old flame, Sara.

Perseids are performing an experiment on the *Andromeda*, using the black hole as a power conduit. At the same time, 300 years
continued on page 6



CAPTAIN'S LOG: "Blood and Fire" ... (concluded)

continued from page 2

and only two able to beam out at a time, Freeman unexpectedly injected the others with a tranquilizer so they'd have to be rescued first. That led Spock to surmise that the medic had learned his bedside manner from Doctor McCoy.

Sadly, one person didn't make it back when the bloodworms broke through the barrier. (It's not too hard to figure out who.)

Captain Kirk then learned that Blodgett had been using the research to help Section 31 develop the bloodworms as a weapon against the Klingons. McCoy came up with his own antidote to the plasmacytes, but it had to be delivered by a living human body, so Yar volunteered to do it if Kirk agreed to tell her daughter about the sacrifice of "Jenna Natasha Yar."

With the situation resolved and Blodgett in custody, Kargh and Kirk ordered their ships out of range as the *Copernicus* was incinerated by the stellar energy in some spectacular effects.

Quite a lot happened in that two-parter. I only have a one-part Clint Eastwood hat, but it will have to do.

The good: *Phase II* continues to be the "gold standard" of independent *Trek* productions, and I particularly enjoyed the tips of the hat to *DS9* and *TNG*.

I appreciated the fact that the same-sex romance in the episode was underplayed instead of overdone, such as having Kirk give a big speech on the universal nature of love or something like that.

And while "Blood and Fire" was pretty tragic, there was a good deal of humor throughout, mostly provided by Spock. I'm sad that Tolpin will be replaced by Brandon Stacy in the next episode, but such is the often fleeting nature of fan films.

Again, the acting, effects, costumes and props improved by leaps and bounds over earlier efforts, and sometimes I have to wonder how much longer *Phase II* can continue to be considered an "amateur" series.

The bad: To make Part 2 available in

November, the *Phase II* folks had to include a preliminary soundtrack in which you can hear things like the wooden floors of the sets creaking when people walk on them. Still, their website—<http://www.startrekphase2.com>—states that this will be updated with better sound very soon.

The ugly: The first time I saw Part 1 and a rough cut of Part 2 was at Shore Leave north of Baltimore, Maryland, back in July of 2008. That means I went without any new stuff from these folks for about 18 months! That's a long time, but I realize it takes a while for volunteers to put together such labors of love.

Along with "Blood and Fire," *Phase II* released the first six minutes of the next adventure, "Enemy Starfleet," at the same time. I'm impressed by what I've seen so far, particularly the shots of the *Enterprise*, and I'm looking forward to enjoying the entire episode, which is slated to be made available in the spring. ■

Captain Randy Hall



From top left: Peter Kirk and Alex Freeman get a lot better acquainted during "Blood and Fire."



COMING EVENTS

DECEMBER

December 19 We'll celebrate the season at Ann Harding's home in Potomac, Maryland. Dinner will be served, then our monthly club meeting!

SCIENCE TREK: The end of the world ... (concluded)

continued from page 3

Burns, My Organic Market and especially our intrepid editor, etc., Wayne, for the great job he's done running this ship for the past 315,569,260 seconds.

See you next year? ■

Second Officer Phil Margolies

Web Notes:

- www.whowillsurvive2012.com,
- www.imdb.com/title/tt1190080,
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012,
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hz86TsGx3fc, and
- www.rottentomatoes.com/m/2012.

REFLECTIONS: Lightning strikes again—4 (concluded)

continued from page 4

earlier, Sara, Dylan's bride-to-be is trying to free the *Andromeda Ascendant* from the same black hole. Harper's experiment in transportation establishes a link to them. Eventually, the link is used to transport Dylan back in time, and they are reunited. Harper tries desperately devise a way to bring Sara into the future.

This is another good episode. It reminds us of Dylan's impending wedding, which we first heard about in the pilot. We discover details of his relationship with Sara Riley, a research scientist, and her relentless effort to rejoin the one true love in her life.

Rating: ▲▲▲. ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard

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