

COMSTAR

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

MAY, 2010

CAPTAIN'S LOG: Rising from the Ashes

"In 2010 ... the Future Returns!"

That's the motto of one of the newest—and one of the best—independent *Trek* productions. *Star Trek: Phoenix* is "rising out of the ashes of time" with its first episode, entitled "Cloak and Dagger."

Phoenix is the brainchild of Leo Roberts, who assembled a cast and crew in the Seattle, Wash., area to give us a look at what the *Trek* universe could be more than four decades after the destruction of the Romulans' home world in *Star Trek XI*.

The 30-minute story gets underway with the revelation that the Romulans

have adopted a new home on a planet they call Rihannsu, a name for the race created by author Diane Duane in several *Star Trek* novels she wrote dealing with the Vulcans' pointy-eared relatives.

Elsewhere in the quadrant, the *Phoenix* has been seriously damaged in a major battle. The destruction is so extensive that Captain Bryce Avari (played by Ben Andrews)

must wait several weeks until his bridge is rebuilt.

That situation aggravates the captain even more since his huge vessel is a "city in space" that makes Starfleet officers (many of whom were chosen by politicians, admirals

and the leaders of several Federation worlds and not Avari) share the starship with slimy ambassadors, an overzealous special ops team and individuals from pre-

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"Eclipse" is a truly great first try from folks who decided to look at the *Trek* universe more than 40 years after the destruction of Romulus (in *Star Trek XI*).

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Maybe we'll get together and talk *Trek*

The next monthly meeting of the U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek and Science Fiction Club will be held on Saturday, May 22, at the home of Annie and John White.

We'll get together to go out to dinner about 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 catch up on the latest sci-fi television shows and feature films. We'll also discuss the upcoming Shore Leave convention.

For directions to this month's meeting, get the latest insert. ■

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CAPTAIN'S LOG: Rising from the Ashes *[Continued]*

viously unknown planets.

Nevertheless, the NCX-101138 attempts to locate and rescue a shuttle containing Commander Jaryn (the first officer as portrayed by Ben Johnson), Ambassador T'Von (a Romulan raised as a Vulcan and played by Roy Stanton) and Lieutenant Commander Yamora Vu'Shan (the ship's science officer, who's portrayed by Nicole Santora).

The shuttle was on a diplomatic mission until the officers aboard received a distress call from Katrassi Prime in the Neutral Zone and rushed to offer assistance. Instead, they were attacked by big plant-covered critters..

As if the situation wasn't already bad enough, the power for the trio's phasers, tricorders and communicators fluctuated wildly. In the ensuing struggle, Vu'Shan was injured, forcing the other officers to take positions to protect her.

When the *Phoenix* arrives at the planet, Avari gathers an away team that includes Doctor Thomas Alden (played snarkily by James Lyle) and Security Chief Arca Niran (S. Joe Downing)

During the ensuing battle, Avari literally runs into a cloaked Romulan named Viron (Daniel Christensen), who tells the captain that the entire incident—including the faked distress signal—had been planned to bring him out into the open.

Avari asks why someone would go to all that trouble to get to "little old me," so Viron tells him the objective is to gain the knowledge he has of something called "Project Labyrinth," and the Romulan can obtain that regardless of whether the captain is dead or alive.

Just then, Viron hits the Romulan with a powerful phaser blast. While examining him, they discover a small device

that neutralizes the power of any Starfleet weapon nearby. Avari turns the item off, and the entire group beams back to the ship.

But Avari wants answers to his questions: Who laid the trap for him and his crew? Why did the Romulan's body disappear after they left the scene? He should get his answers in the next episode.

One other thing I should mention is that the episode contains several "flashbacks" that show how some characters met and why other individuals are on the *Phoenix*. Don't worry; these sequences are brief so you won't get "lost" in them.

Having said that, it's time to beam on my Clint Eastwood hat and get reviewing.

The Good: *Phoenix* combines the best elements of Classic *Trek* and *Next Generation* (the big space ship thing) and *Deep Space Nine* (including non-Starfleet people to generate conflict in the storyline). I think that was very well played.

The production values of "Cloak and Dagger" are terrific. That includes the props. I was impressed with their updated and streamlined phasers and tricorders (which you wear on your sleeve rather than carry in your hand).

I was also impressed with the new uniforms. They look great, and I was interested to see that they changed the command color on the jackets from red to purple. Hey, even the nasty admiral had a cool costume!

Speaking of cool things, I have to say that the special effects were tremendous, but my favorite is the new transporter effect. When I saw it for the first time, I

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Check out our club website: www.usschesapeake.org

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SCIENCE *TREK*: Science vs. Fiction

Science

You saw them in the Apple store last Thursday. Your friend Tom knows this guy Richard whose co-worker Harry actually owns one. The Apple iPad. The latest tablet computer, brought to you by the company that brought you the Apple II, the Apple Lisa, and the Apple Newton.

Weighing in at 1.5 pounds and stretching about 12 inches on the diagonal (with a cell phone thin half inch depth), the iPad carries a lithium-polymer battery that gives it 9 to 10 hours of powered life. Inside, an A4 chip and up to 64 gigabytes of flash storage provide the computing power.



What can they do? What can't they do. iPads are not only capable of receiving wireless communication (3G, 802.11n, and Bluetooth). They can also run a variety of applications, recording and playing audio, and playing movies. They can be used not only for data entry and stylus-based writing/note taking, they can be used for more artistic purposes such as sketching with a third-party stylus.

Fiction

You saw them in the 23rd century first, though you might not have realized it. They were named in the 24th century first and later found their origin in the 22nd. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* gave us the name...the Personal Access Display Device aka PADD. Similar devices were (are...will be?) used by the Federation and its space-faring counterparts across the Galaxy.

Built from a boronite casing and powered by sarium krellide power cells, the Starfleet PADD operates using a combination of isolar components and circuit boards.



What can they do? What can't they do. PADDs are not only capable of receiving wireless communication and even subspace transmissions, running a variety of applications, recording and playing audio, and playing movies. They can be used not only for data entry and stylus-based writing/note taking, they can be used for more artistic purposes such as sketching.

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ART CREDITS:

Amazon.com 4,5
Apple.com 3,6
blinkbox.com 4
jordanhoffman.com
Insert - back
Maps.google.com
Insert - front
Memory-alpha.org 3
Stphoenix.com 1,5
thecolumnists.com 6

REFLECTIONS: Lightning Strikes Again — 8

As we wind down to the end of *Andromeda*'s first season, one thing is incredibly obvious, and it's definitely NOT the story lines. *Andromeda* is nothing like any of the other science-fiction shows we've seen, except.....well, you know...., dare I mention whatshisname? There are layers upon layers making up this show, and each layer is a mystery wrapped in an enigma, surrounded by a conundrum. My kind of show.

Fear & Loathing in the Milky Way - Ashley Edward Miller/ Zack Stentz

While out scavenging for parts in the Maru, Harper and Trance are kidnapped by Gerentex, the Nightsider who originally hired them to find the *Andromeda Ascendant*.

Trance and Harper are caught off guard by the arrival of Gerentex, literally at their front door. He shoots them with a dart gun that contains microscopic generators. The generators give off an electrical charge whenever Gerentex presses a button. Gerentex needs the *Andromeda* for two reasons.

First, he needs to escape from a crazed bounty hunter (the only kind we ever see on TV, named Reaper, who wants Gerentex's hide for a bounty. Second, he wants to search for Hestoli's diary. Hestoli was the "Mad Perseid," who legend has it, found a way to stripstream back to Tarn Vedran.

Pay close attention, because this storyline, the way back to Tarn Vedran, has a direct link to the final season and the last episode. I love how this little clue was dropped way back in the first season. This is a funny episode for the most part. Zack and Ash seem to love writing for Harper; they seem to have a knack for his dialogue and speech patterns.

Meanwhile, back on *Andromeda*, Dy-

lan had to deal with the Perseids wanting to drop out of the Commonwealth. The Reaper was a bit disappointing, looking like a reject muppet from *Farscape*. And we visit the *Albuquerque Drift*, the Los Vegas of the galaxy. There is one hilarious scene where Harper and Gerentex are holding guns on each other in a Mexican standoff. Trance loses it and tells them, "Enough! It's been 45 minutes! You will put the guns down, or I will kill you both, and I'll get away with because I'm cute!"



The Devil Takes the Hindmost - Ashley Edward Miller/ Zack Stentz

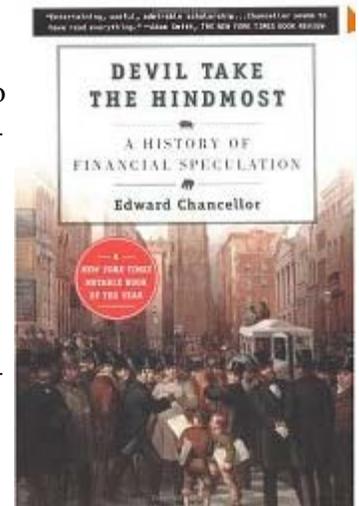
While delivering relief supplies to a Than colony, *Andromeda* gets a distress call from Rev Bem's spiritual mentor an advisor.

Thaddius Blake is Bem's mentor. He guided him in the teachings of the Way. He has been guiding a race of humans called the Hygera, descendants of human settlers who lost their technology after the fall of the Commonwealth. They are being attacked by Slavers, who demand they hand settlers over to them for slave labor. Dylan and Rev Bem try to prevent this.

Dylan wants to teach them to use force lancers to defend themselves. Blake is vehemently opposed to weapons. He says their faith will protect them. Dylan wonders why he called him in the first place. Rev is on the fence.

This could have been a so-so episode if it wasn't for two things. First, the Hygera had genetic memory. In other words, they retained the memories of their parents and their parents and so on. This created a fascinating dilemma: Do you introduce violence to a race that

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You mean it's not an episode about financial speculations?



Which one is he? Fear or loathing?

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CAPTAIN'S LOG: Rising from the Ashes? [concluded]

sat there slack-jawed in amazement, so I went back and watched it a few more times.

There was also a tip of the hat to Classic *Trek* as the pointy-eared guy traded barbs with the grouchy doctor at one

point. I hope that doesn't happen *too* often, but the occasional nod to Spock and McCoy is a fun thing.

The Bad: As much as I appreciate budget constraints, I would have enjoyed seeing even a tiny bit of the big battle that left

the *Phoenix* in such bad shape. That would have helped me better understand why the captain is so gun-shy.

The Ugly: The first time I heard about *Star Trek: Phoenix*, I thought it would deal with a starship leading the Federation "out of the ashes" of a crushing defeat or something like that, but I see now that would have been a cliché.

On the other hand, I wondered if the name might have something to do with where the film was being made. Did we come perilously close to *Star Trek: Tucson*? Or *Star Trek: Albuquerque*? No insult to those of you who live in those cities, but I'm glad I was mistaken on that point.

Again, let me recommend you catch "Cloak and Dagger" at www.stphoenix.com. ■

Captain Randy Hall



Star Trek: Phoenix Rises

BOOK REVIEW: Seven Deadly Sins, 'Reservoir Ferengi'

The two Ferengi that you LOVE to hate and HATE to love are back! Can you imagine the mischief that takes place when Quark's cousin, Gaila, and Brunt, formerly of the FCA, partner up? (For anyone who is not familiar with Gaila, we met him in the *Deep Space Nine* Season Five episode, "Business as Usual", when he persuaded Quark to join him in arms dealing with a hew-mon named Hagath.

This story takes place after Rom, Quark's brother, has been made the new Grand Nagus in the *Deep Space Nine* episode, "The Dogs of War" and the flow of the story seems to use the technique that we've come to call as "back-shadowing". There are other familiar characters as well which includes Pel, (from *DS9*, "Rules of Acqui-

sition"), and the Breen.

As the previous story focused on the deadly sin of Pride and the Romulans, the second story in this anthology focuses on the deadly sin of Greed. But, you may ask, aren't the Ferengi naturally greedy? This "hew-mon" would answer "Yes" given that their entire culture is based on greed, (i.e. The Divine Treasury, the Tower of Commerce, earning profit, The Ferengi Rules of Acquisition, etc.).

The other question, however, is how far would any Ferengi go in order to acquire profit if given the opportunity? We've witnessed Quark wrestle

with (gasp!) his conscience and sever his ties with his malevolent cousin as dramati-



Let's see...the Borg's obvious, but which sin is Sisko?

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COMING EVENTS

May 22..... Time for our next monthly meeting! We'll be at the home of Annie and John White in Laurel, Maryland. We'll go out to dinner at 5:00, then our monthly club meeting will start no later than 7:00 p.m.!

SCIENCE TREK: Science vs. Fiction [concluded]

The Droid Tricorder App

When science and fiction meet...

From the Wiki site (see Web Notes):

“Tricorder is a Trekkie geek toy that turns your Android phone into a Tricorder. “

Web Notes:

<http://www.apple.com/ipad/>

<http://memory-alpha.org/wiki/PADD>

<http://code.google.com/p/moonblink/wiki/Tricorder> ■

Second Officer Phil Margolies

REFLECTIONS: Lightning Strikes Again — 8 [concluded]

has never known it, and do you introduce the concept of killing to a race that never had it? Even to save themselves?

Also Teanna's solution was to sedate Rev Bem, whom the whole village revered because the founder of the Way, the Anointed, was also Magog. She used him to infect herself with Magog DNA, causing her to “give birth” to several Magog, who eat their way out of the host body and grow within hours, thus creating a

Magog army to fight the Slavers.

As crazy as that sounded, the Magog gave birth to retain her DNA. This gave the Magog genetic memory. So you have Magog who remember what it's like to be human and to be pacifist, but also has the overpowering urge to eat everything it sees. Talk about internal conflict and a see food diet. ▲▲▲▲■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard

BOOK REVIEW: Troublesome Minds [concluded]

cally as possible. Gaila obviously survived that debacle when he turned up again in a subsequent DS9 episode, “The Magnificent Ferengi”. However, Gaila prefers to pursue profit in the only way he knows how...via arms dealings...and he has managed to “restructure” his business and resume this controversial pursuit. This time, he recruits Brunt to replace Quark, in spite of his misgivings about hiring a former Liquidator.

Brunt doesn't trust Gaila either, especially given that he is cousin to Brunt's

most HATED enemy, Quark. Never mind that Gaila owns his own moon. As business proceeds, it appears that greed gets the better of Gaila and that greed, along with Gaila's paranoia, knows no bounds! Does Brunt have any limits to his own greed? That question is hard to answer given the ending to this Ferengi tale. Anyone want to hire “Dog, the Bounty Hunter”? ■

*Xenobiologist and Xenopsychologist
Pat McCoy*



Again I ask:
Fear or loathing?