

STAR TREK: The Next Generation

# The giant jellyfish have to go

by Scott Neily

Predicted to have one of the highest TV ratings since Live Aid, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* made a shining launch last Friday night. Unlike the original, this Trek is in first-run syndication and is not subject to the whims of an idiot program director at any particular station. The show, produced by Paramount, is sold to those stations that wish to run it (over 90 per cent of the American market so far), thus keeping script direction out of the hands of the network meddlers. This control will ensure that the storylines will be of superior quality, and any possibly controversial topics may be covered without network interference.

The first episode, "Encounter at Farpoint", introduced the crew and mechanics of the new Galaxy-class Enterprise. It has been 78 years since the final voyage of the original Enterprise (as shown in *Star Trek III*), and the new ship is a vast improvement over the old. Several times the size of the original, the new ship provides new special effects which will keep the hardware buffs in awe. Items like multiple turbo-elevators, a huge, lounge-like bridge, aft torpedoes, an illusionary forest, and guide maps in the windows are nice but hopefully will not be the entire plot of a future show.

While the new technology has progressed in more or less a constant manner, the only flaw I caught was the limited speed of the warp drive. The redesigned Enterprise in *Star Trek IV* was capable of hitting warp 12, yet this new one is stuck at warp 9.5. And what happened to Transwarp drive? With every Trekkie in the universe watching, the Great Bird of the Galaxy should watch the technical points or he might end up laying an egg.

I like the new characters. Really. The Captain Kirk image has been broken down into two components, the wise and the gung-ho. The new captain, Jean-Luc Picard, is a rather stern, better-safe-than-sorry kind of leader, while Executive Officer Riker figures as the man of action. Riker will also take Jim Kirk's place as ship's romantic, with two love/sex interests already in the works, including the ship's doctor, Beverly Crusher. Her character is similar to a mature Nurse Chapel. Beverly's son, Wesley, a promising character on the strength of the actor alone, may add a bit of adolescent silliness to the series with his blatant match-making. Wait and see.

The character of Spock has

been split into three. His logical side is characterized by Lt. Data, the analytical android (a less-excited version of *Star Wars's* C-3PO, in some ways). Spock the stoic, Starfleet officer has become Worf the Klingon, a perfect example of his now-peaceful race (I'd hate to see him pissed off, though). And Lt. Troi, the ship's third officer, has inherited Spock's third part, his telepathic abilities.

The two characters who stand out as original are Security Chief Lt. Tasha Yar, and Helmsman Lt. Geordi LaForge. Tasha will pro-

vide the hot-headed element in the show, with her obviously harsh background and boot-in-the-groin maneuvers. Geordi, who is blind and wears a pair of vision correctors from the ...it Store, might add the saving bit of human depth to the show.

The opening episode had a lot of high points but was like an hour-and-a-half show stretched into two hours. The action scenes were filled with just the right amount of special effects, the slow scenes had enough trivial details to prevent the viewer from falling asleep, and the rest

of the episode had some clever dialogue.

The standard jokes were present, but the overall good-humour feeling of the old Trek was lacking. The problem may simply be that the actors haven't had enough time to develop their characters into the "family unit" of the original. The formal stiffness, possibly brought on by attempting to continue a legend, may be banished as the actors become more comfortable with their parts.

One thing that annoyed me was the super-duper special

effects ending. The giant jellyfish have to go! Interstellar-sized monsters once or twice are fine, but the original Trek used up more than its fair share. I hope the human drama element won't be overshadowed by grandiose special effects and retarded plots, but there is a possibility that the show could go the way of *Galactica* and *V*.

I could say a lot more about the new show. As it is with every show, the audience will be the judge. I'm a biased Trekkie, but in my opinion, the show will "live long and prosper" (I think).

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