

STAR TREK

WINS A NEW GENERATION OF STUNNED FOLLOWERS

confronting each other with theories and ideas, because the 1960s was a very radical period where the Enterprise was trying to navigate through a wide range of political ideologies that range from ultra-conservatism to anarchism. What happens in the new series, is there's more of a consensus, where people say, "Captain, I don't think we should do this," and the Captain will think about it and they have a parlee. This happens in the old series as well, but it's far more controlled. In fact, from what I've seen of the new series, if you were to go through the episodes, each one has its foundation in a previous *Star Trek* episode but the responses are completely different.

EXCALIBUR: How do the ideologies of the two shows differ?

GOULDING: In the 1960s, the primary focus of *Star Trek* was a "gung ho" type of ideology. Kirk attacks; Kirk doesn't surrender his ship. In three episodes of the new series, Picard surrenders his ship without a fight. Even the Klingon blows his cookies when he hears that, and Picard says, "No, no." Basically what they're saying, and this is where George Lucas (creator of *Star Wars*) comes in, is "Fear, anger and aggression, these are the paths to the Dark Side." So, we're going to be cool, calm and collected, because we control the whole galaxy anyway." In the old *Star Trek*, Kirk has the Ulysses S. Grant approach. In fact, in one episode, called The Savage Curtain, the imaginary Lincoln basically compares Kirk to Grant because Kirk has the unconditional and total surrender approach, which is the frontier ethos.

In the original *Star Trek* you have a Greek motif, with the Odyssean type of hero wandering. It's basically, as I say, a frontier ethos of individualism and meritocracy and private gain, and some sense of "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few." In the new series there's a very distinct medieval undertone to it, which Lucas has a great deal to do with the special effects. Also, there are quite a few references that seem to come from the quiet, controlled passions and aesthetics of the Tsung Dynasty, which has an oriental medieval image, where you have castles and medieval-looking swords, knights and so forth. What happens, is you have a central military command that's primarily focusing on not causing any waves, so it restricts its frontier generals from doing the things that Kirk would've liked to have done in his explorations.

EXCALIBUR: Do you think that Roddenberry is trying to convey a message through the new emphasis on peace?

GOULDING: All of the criticisms that I've made about cultural imperialism and so forth, which Roddenberry admits to in the old series, he is now trying to jettison beyond. You know, sort of beam himself in front of all this and create a utopia where you don't have those sorts of concerns and there is some sense of quietude. There isn't the same sort of confrontation where "We're going to fire our ultra nuclear weapons if you fire yours," and so forth. There's a sense that not to fight is far more honourable than to fight, which again, is part of the Neo-Confucian sort of philosophy that I see as an undertone with the new *Star Trek*. So, it's an attempt to give some sort of cogency to the fact that we're going to survive through the 20th century.

You see that in terms of equality with women and so forth. In the original series, *Star Trek* tried to present some of these images, but the networks wouldn't handle it. You see women that are quite active in command positions in the new series, although they are deferential to the Captain.

EXCALIBUR: Is there anything in particular that you prefer in the old series that doesn't exist in the new?

GOULDING: If there's one thing I could say I like about the old series: There are a lot of cerebral discussions. Not all the special effects were particularly good in the old series. Now, what happens is, Lucas' \$100 million scenarios produce these brilliant special effects but there's not as much philosophical discussion.

EXCALIBUR: So you don't believe that the new show addresses issues the same way the old one did?

GOULDING: The new show basically goes beyond the issues. Instead of having the "gung ho" sort of mentality that will confront the issues, there's this detente approach; negotiation and so forth. What you get are summary statements like "Religion, we don't have to deal with this anymore—hokey mythologies—that's all out. Economy, that's all taken care of." Picard makes these statements in a couple of episodes. "We won't really deal with these issues. We'll just assume they're solved." Roddenberry actually said that. He said, "I

don't know how to solve the issues of today, so what we're going to do is produce the earth as a paradise and then send these ships out into space and we'll see what we come across."

EXCALIBUR: What place will aliens have in this show, now that the Klingons are part of the Federation of Planets and the Vulcans are completely absent?

GOULDING: There are new aliens that are introduced into the Federation in the new series. In the old series the aliens are not so alien at all. They don't even really look alien and they all manage to speak English wherever the Enterprise goes. They eventually come down being on the side of the enemies of the United States. In the new series, aliens are introduced that are very, very alien, but they don't do anything. There's an episode that's a take off of Journey to Babel and aliens are introduced into the scenario. They don't do anything, except try to eat each other, and what Picard does is ignore them.

EXCALIBUR: Do you believe that television reflects reality, or that the opposite is true?

GOULDING: Television is a double edged sword; it does both. People create television. Television also reflects back, in creating you. So there are two situations operating here. People get what they want on TV and the networks get what they want from people by advertising things to them so they can respond in a certain way.

You can watch a television program and say, "I agree or disagree with this position." You can categorically reject it if you're old enough to think in those terms, but if you're a young kid growing up, then you want some role model, and that's where television plays a very important part. What people have said today, is that human interactions have become so skewed that we're now looking to *Magnum PI* to tell us what to do. What's he going to do next? What's Higgins going to do next? We're looking for fictional characters to tell us how to act.

The old *Star Trek* presented an incredible role model for a liberal democratic society with internal and external conflicts that was trying to generate some sensibility for itself. I'd have to say I disagree with a lot of those positions but the way it was presented was brilliant.

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