

STAR TREK VI:

As Captain Kirk heads into his final voyage, both he and his Klingon enemy find themselves wanting to come home to Canada.

According to Christopher Plummer, who's the villain of **Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country**, William Shatner, alias Kirk for many long years, "wants very much to come back." Plummer himself, who is often in Toronto these days filming the CTV series *Counterstrike*, says, "I've thought of it many times, but I can't afford it. Taxes are so outrageous. But Bill and I hope to do something together here."

Chatting on the *Counterstrike* set recently, Plummer confessed to being "a bit of a Trekkie. I've been a fan of the TV show since it started, and I'm an old friend of Shatner's. We started together in Montreal and we were always up for the same parts. Once he understudied for me in *Henry V*, and one night I had a ghastly kidney stone



THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

attack and had to stay overnight in hospital. Bill went on as Henry, and he did everything exactly opposite to what I had done. I knew then that he was going to be a star because the son of a gun was his own master."

Star Trek started as a weekly TV series in 1966. NBC yanked it after three seasons, but the fans had other ideas. They began to hold *Star Trek* conventions around the world, as the series was shown in syndication. In 1979, the first *Star Trek* movie set an industry record, with the highest-grossing opening week in box-office history. Leonard Nimoy, the incomparable Spock (and director of *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*), says it's because "we've always looked at ourselves in new ways."

But now it's coming to an end. After 25 years of cinematic magic, the starship Enterprise, under Kirk's command, will meet the crafty Klingons for the last time. And it's appropriate that Shatner

and Plummer, both Shakespearean actors of old, season that swan song with a bit of the Bard of Avon. "Nick [director Nicholas Meyer] is a terrific Anglophile," says Plummer. "He loves English theatre, and so we get the Klingons to recite Shakespeare. They're going to bandy the Bard back and forth over the dinner table."

Plummer, the charismatic stage star of Broadway, all three Stratfords, and London, with over 40 films (including *The Sound of Music*) and many TV dramas to his credit, loves Chang, the character he plays in *Star Trek VI*. "Villains are much more interesting than heroes," says the actor, who recently played both Macbeth and Iago on Broadway.

"I was allowed a free hand for my makeup as Chang. I didn't want some massive head put on me or a lot of guck on my face. So we concocted a bald look, a fabulous costume with an eyepatch that looks as if it's nailed into my head. It's all

very sinister. He's part reptile, so I had great fun."

Plummer was born in Toronto, an only child in a family that has included a governor-general and a prime minister. He grew up in Montreal, where his mother started taking him to the theatre when he was five. Ten years later, he began acting professionally, "because I was so bad at school." Eventually, he toured with the legendary stage actress Katharine Cornell — and learned an important lesson from a near-disaster.

"I was pretty young and I was fooling around. One day I got loaded and missed a rehearsal. Kit Cornell called me into her dressing room and said, very quietly, brushing her hair, 'If you ever do that again, you're not going to open in New York.' For the first time I understood what discipline was, and it changed my entire life. I never touched another drop while I was working ever again. She scared the bejesus out of me."

Star Trek VI opens in theatres across Canada on December 6.

— Pearl Sheffy Gefen



As the Enterprise embarks on its final voyage, the valiant crew (top) takes on the Klingons, led by Christopher Plummer (above).