

Star Trek enterprises to seek out new TV shows

Star Trek: The Next Generation
ITV

review by Glenn St-Germain
Space. The final frontier.

These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise. Its continuing mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life, and new civilizations. To boldly go where no one has gone before!

And so begins a new series of deep-space adventures with the Enterprise. One hundred years after Captain James Kirk began his famous five-year mission aboard the first Enterprise, a brand-new Enterprise takes off under the command of Captain Jean-Luc Picard.

For those who missed the premiere and first episode last weekend, a brief recap. Things have changed in the intervening years. For one thing, the Klingons are now

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part of the Federation (or at least allied with it), and the ship's helmsman is a Klingon. The new ship is big. Real big. Many of the crew members actually have their families on board.

Some changes are more indicative of the fact that the old series was a product of the sixties, with its old-fashioned (by today's standards) attitudes. For instance, female crew members no longer wear embarrassingly short miniskirts for their uniforms, nor are they relegated to minor positions. The new Enterprise's chief engineer, chief medical officer, and security chief are all women. I fully expect to see a woman commanding a starship sometime during the series.

The crew is a mixed bag of humans and aliens, with little similarity to the cast of the original series. Captain Picard is a seasoned veteran of space travel. The first officer, Ryker, looks like a 24th-Century Yuppie. The helmsman is a Klingon. The navigator is an android (a walking information bank who would like to be human). The security officer is eager and a bit hotheaded.

The two-hour premiere, "Encounter at

Farpoint", makes a good start. The Enterprise is stopped by an alien who commands the ship to go no farther: when it does, he puns some of the bridge crew on trial to represent humanity on charges of being a savage race unfit to live. As a test, the alien gives them a puzzle to solve involving their first mission. The fact that the alien is psychotic and keeps changing the rules doesn't help. Mixed in this was a lot of scene setting. A brief appearance by 137-year-old Admiral (Dr.) McCoy was a nice touch, and a perfect way to launch the new series. (As long as they don't make a habit of it).

The first regular episode was more of a disappointment. "The Naked Now" was essentially a rewrite of "The Naked Time" from the original series: a virus infects the crew and strips away their inhibitions. The ship is endangered by an afflicted crew member in the engine room, and the antidote is found just in time. The only thing missing was someone singing "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen" over the ship's intercom system.

There are a few problems with the series. The ship looks a bit top-heavy (although the effects, courtesy of Industrial Light and Magic, are excellent). The security officer is too hot-headed. At the trial, when a guard points a gun at her, she flattens him in two seconds, a la Chuck Norris.

Then there's the doctor's son, Wesley, a twelve-year-old boy genius. Child prodigies are growing like weeds on TV lately. (Max Headroom has Bryce; Howard Hesseman has a whole classroom on his show), and as usual, the kid is irritating. It was his fault that the ship was endangered in the first episode — but he also saves the day. If we're lucky, someone will shove him out of an airlock this season.

Overall, the series does show promise. After all, the first series was far from perfect. What will make or break ST:NG is whether they can make the series stand on its own, without constantly tying it to the old. For instance, the rewrite of "The Naked Time" was a mistake so soon after the series' premiere.

A new ship, a new crew, and new adventures is what the series should be. Time will tell whether it ultimately succeeds.

Until then, I'll be watching. It is fun to watch.

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