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EQUINOX 2015

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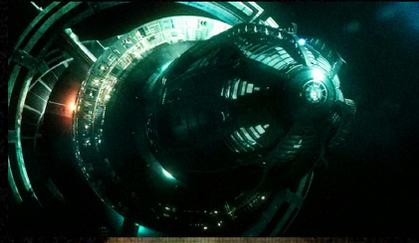
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theLogBook.com 'Zine is an occasional digital magazine-style publication of theLogBook.com, reviving the spirit of such long-gone, much-missed print periodicals as Starlog, Omni, Future Life, and Electronic Games. By mixing film, TV, music, video games, collectibles, and real happenings in space and science, theLogBook.com 'Zine is here to demonstrate that the present is as amazing as any of our imagined futures, and to raise awareness of the incredible things that are being done to turn those futures into reality. Exploring the universe of the real and the realms of imagination, maybe we can heighten our readers' appreciation for both in an attractive, nostalgic format, honoring the past as we dream of the future.

This is also the mission of theLogBook.com as a whole, whose vast, 25+ year database of original material forms the springboard for much of what this publication covers. The site is also home to a daily podcast formatted as a brief "today in history" lesson for anyone of even a slightly geeky bent, and it's home base to our growing catalog of print publications comprehensively chronicling some of these imagined universes. theLogBook.com is a chronicle of what tomorrow looked like yesterday, and how today's tomorrows are taking shape. Buckle in and enjoy the ride.

**Bubonicon 2015 photography: CHARLES PEARSON**      **Alpha Probe photography: ROB O'HARA**  
**Photos on pages 37-48 courtesy NASA, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, European Space Agency, JAXA, Smithsonian Air & Space Museum.**

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## RED DWARF RETURNS!

Red Dwarf cast member Robert Llewellyn spilled the beans on his blog: not only the UK sci-fi comedy favorite Red Dwarf returning, but it's coming back for two seasons. 12 episodes, shot back-to-back, will begin filming this fall in front of a live audience at Pinewood Studios. Red Dwarf XI, consisting of 6 episodes, will premiere on UK cable comedy channel Dave in 2016, with the remaining six to premiere in 2017.

## FOX RE-OPENS X-FILES



Hot on the heels of the unexplained (ooh!) cancellation of a Chris Carter series project at Amazon.com, Fox revealed that it had opened negotiations with X-Files creator Carter and both of the show's stars, David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson, with an eye toward bringing The X-Files back to the network.

The result is a six-episode "event series," due to debut immediately after Super Bowl LI on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, William B. Davis, and Mitch Pileggi reprise their roles, with scripts by Carter and original series writers Glen Morgan and James Wong. Guest stars include Annabeth Gish, and all three of the "Lone Gunmen", Bruce Harwood, Dean Haglund, and Tom Braidwood. Joel McHale (Community) and Lauren Ambrose (Torchwood: Miracle Day, Six Feet Under) guest star.



## NEW HORIZONS' NEXT HORIZON PICKED

What do you do when you've got an incredible, intact spacecraft, capable of doing a near-flawless reconnaissance of Pluto and its moons, still loaded with fuel and still fully functional? According to the team at Johns Hopkins University, which devised and managed the successful New Horizons mission to Pluto, you find another distant, tiny rock in the Kuiper Belt – a zone of debris left over from the birth of the solar system billions of years ago – and send New Horizons there.

The space probe's new target is an



irregular body, just 30 miles across, called 2014 MU69. It orbits a billion miles beyond Pluto's already distant orbit, but New Horizons is equipped to handle this dark, cold environment.

NASA will conduct a review of New Horizons' mission so far, including the status of the spacecraft and funding availability for ground controllers, before approving.

## ESA TEST DRIVES NEW IXV SPACEPLANE

The European Space Agency conducted a successful test launch of its Intermediate eXperimental Vehicle on February 11<sup>th</sup>, launching the mini-spaceplane atop a Vega rocket from ESA's Korou, French Guiana spaceport. The blunt-nosed IXV followed a parabolic arc, reaching a maximum altitude of 412 kilometers before returning to Earth under parachutes, splashing down in the Pacific Ocean in a target area near the Galapagos Islands. Later test flights will try to validate the intended return method, using parafoil-style parachutes (a method considered



and tested early in NASA's Gemini program in the 1960s) to bring the two-ton IXV down safely on dry land.

IXV is part of ESA's program to develop its own reusable space vehicle akin to the retired NASA Space Shuttle, leading to a manned spaceflight capability for Europe's space agency. The IXV flight was declared a success, and ESA is already planning a follow-up IXV test launch to take place sometime in 2019 or 2020, this time testing the vehicle's ability for a guided return to land.



## DRAGON V2 SURVIVES PAD ABORT TEST



*SpaceX hopes that the liquid-fuelled SuperDraco engines will eventually be able to land Dragon capsules on dry land*

SpaceX has successfully demonstrated survivable abort capability of its manned Dragon V2 (also known as Crew Dragon) spacecraft. A May 6<sup>th</sup> "pad abort test" saw an unmanned Dragon V2 fire its built-in SuperDraco engines to lift off, carrying the capsule and its service module to an altitude of almost a mile. The service module (which contains fuel and cargo, but no habitable space) was then jettisoned and the capsule returned for an ocean splashdown under parachutes. Sensors aboard the capsule recorded G forces that would have been survivable by a human crew. In June, NASA verified that SpaceX had successfully reached the pad abort milestone. An abort test involving separation from a Falcon rocket will take place later in 2015; SpaceX hopes to fly its first crewed Dragon V2 to the ISS in 2017.



*All fuel spent, the SuperDraco engines shut down, allowing the combined command/service module to coast for a few seconds before parachutes deploy*



*The uncrewed Dragon V2 test article awaits recovery in the Atlantic Ocean. (All photos courtesy SpaceX)*

# THE ONE-YEAR MISSIONS BEGIN

Getting a spacecraft to Mars is a long haul, longer than any manned spaceflight beyond Earth orbit. Apollo lunar explorers were away from Earth for a little over a week per mission, but longer range missions present real risks to space travelers, both physically and psychologically – and it’s best to do a dry run aboard the International Space Station, where returning to Earth is just a Soyuz flight away.



providing scientists and doctors on Earth with a baseline for what long-range space travelers should expect to endure in the future. Kelly’s twin brother, astronaut Mark Kelly, will undergo routine physicals on Earth as his brother’s condition is monitored in space.

NASA astronaut Scott Kelly and Russian cosmonaut Mikhail Kornienko lifted off on March 27<sup>th</sup> to begin a year-long stay in orbit,



Another year-long mission began in August for an international team of six trained volunteers in a 36-by-20-foot sealed dome in Hawaii, with only pre-packaged food and recirculated air, to study the effects of a long-term mission.



# SEVEN TONS OF SPINNING METAL (ALL ALONE IN THE NIGHT)

The first unmanned supply flight in support of the International Space Station's one-year mission, an automated Progress cargo vehicle, has become the second total loss in the history of Russia's venerable ferry spacecraft. Carrying three tons of consumables, supplies, clothes, experiments and equipment to the ISS, Progress M-27M ran into problems the moment it hit space. Telemetry was lost moments before the shutdown of the third stage, and video from the Progress showed it tumbling out of control. Remote control could not be regained by Russian ground controllers, and a



This view of the Earth swept into the camera's frame every three seconds as Progress tumbled out of control

telemetry downlink (containing the spacecraft's vital signs, which would have been helpful in diagnosing the problem) could never be established. Progress M-27M tumbled harmlessly back into Earth's atmosphere in early May, still carrying its cargo intended for current and future ISS crews.

NASA, JAXA (the Japanese space agency) and Roskosmos (Russia's space agency) keep the station supplied well ahead of schedule, but the later failure of a SpaceX Dragon cargo vehicle (the first in-flight loss of SpaceX's ISS resupply contract) put that schedule in jeopardy. A later Progress flight succeeded in reaching the station in July.

A previous Progress ISS resupply flight failed to make orbit in 2011, and a botched docking attempt caused a near-catastrophic collision with space station Mir in 1996. Progress vehicles have flown since 1978.

Everything Old Is New Again

## BIG FINISH DOES NEW WHO

After years of operating behind a contractual barrier that prohibited direct mention of any element of the new television series, Big Finish Productions has announced multiple new audio projects that are the tip of the iceberg of a contract with the BBC, allowing the audio production company access to the enemies and settings created in the ten years of 21<sup>st</sup> century Doctor Who.

The "Classic Doctors, New Monsters" box set will see the fifth Doctor (Peter Davison) squaring off against Weeping Angels, the sixth Doctor (Colin Baker) jousting with the Judoon, the seventh Doctor (Sylvester McCoy) rattling sabers at the Sycorax, and the eighth Doctor (Paul McGann), during the Time War, fighting the Sontarans.



A fan-favorite Sontaran shows up alongside two fellow Victorian-era investigators (but probably not the ones you're expecting) of alien and unusual incursions in the two-disc special one-off event, *Jago & Litefoot & Strax*, while the wartime Prime Minister himself, Winston Churchill (Ian McNeice) returns in *The Churchill Years*.

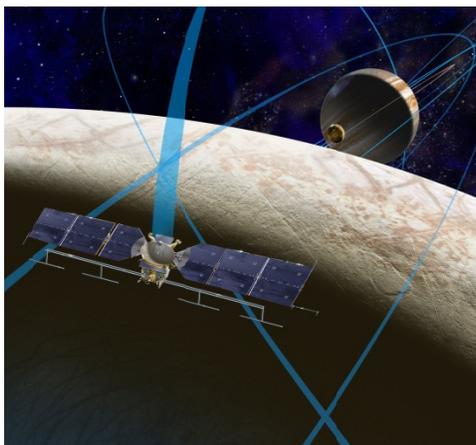
Alex Kingston returns as River Song, both in her own box set (*The Diary of River Song*) and appearing alongside the eighth Doctor in the second box set of the *Doom Coalition* storyline.

Also being revived in audio form is Torchwood, with the first two audio stories starring John Barrowman and Gareth David-Lloyd respectively. Most of these will be released in 2016.

## NASA EUROPA MISSION APPROVED

With a launch date that doesn't arrive until sometime in the 2020s, NASA's still-unnamed Europa orbiter mission will move into Jupiter's neighborhood, with orders to study its most intriguing moon.

To get close enough to Europa to perform flybys at an altitude of under 20 miles, the Europa orbiter will have to pass through some of the densest parts of Jupiter's



intense magnetic field, a harsh radiation environment that has threatened the electronics of such past missions as the Pioneer and Voyager space probes.

During these flybys, the orbiter would look for signs of water plumes, similar to the geysers at Saturn's icy moon Enceladus. Nine instruments have been selected, but none of them includes a lander.

# HUBBLE TURNS 25

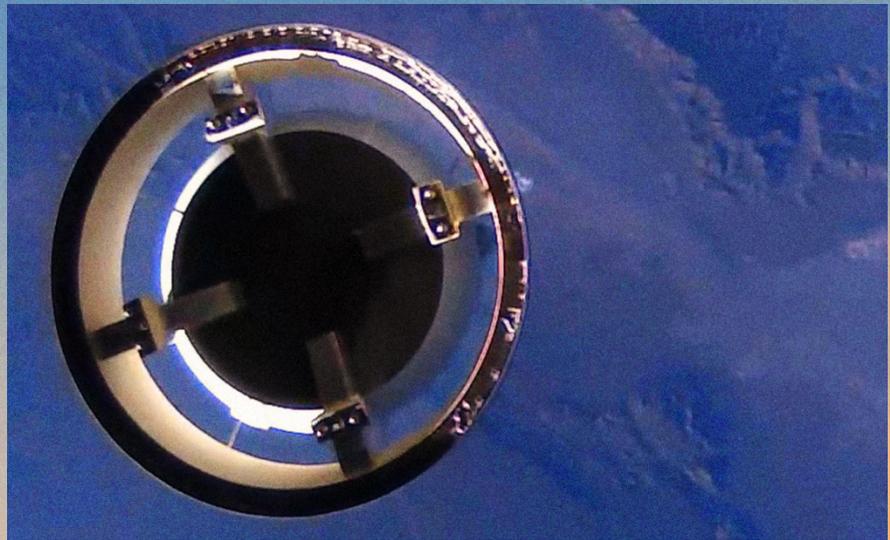
April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Space Shuttle mission that launched the Hubble Space Telescope, which has now been operating in Earth orbit for a quarter of a century. First imagined in the 1940s and designed and approved in the 1970s, the HST was launched in 1990 from the cargo bay of Space Shuttle Discovery.

To commemorate the anniversary, NASA has released this photo, combining visible light and near-infrared views of the Westerlund 2 star cluster at the heart of a stellar nursery designated Gum 29, which spans 350 light years. The light from this nebular star birthplace and the cluster was emitted over 13,000 years ago – when Earth's last major ice age was winding down.

# BLUE ORIGIN DECLARES FIRST TEST FLIGHT A SUCCESS

Capping years of quietly working on its own commercial launch system, Blue Origin (founded by Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos) launched its first test flight from a launch pad in west Texas on April 29th, sending an unmanned suborbital crew capsule up on its New Shepard booster, reaching Mach 3.

The capsule, intended to compete against Virgin Galactic in the suborbital passenger flight market, successfully separated from the booster and reached an altitude of 58 miles, just four miles short of the Kármán Line, which is generally accepted as the limit of Earth's atmosphere for spaceflight purposes.

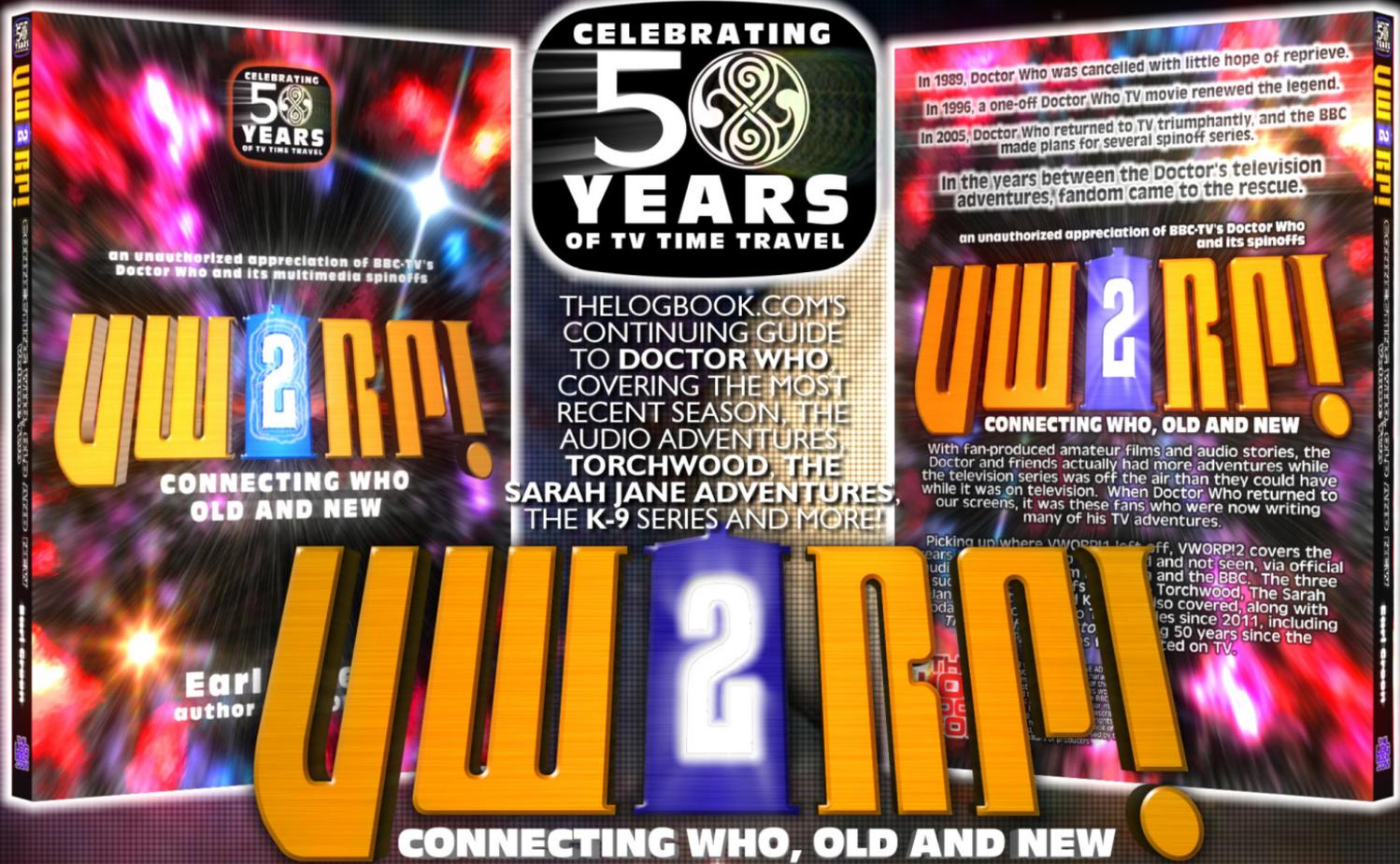


*Booster club: a camera aboard the empty crew capsule looks down just after the capsule separates from the New Shepard rocket*

Once at that altitude, the capsule deployed parachutes and returned to a landing on dry land. The booster then attempted to deploy a braking system and re-ignite, a system intended to return the spent rocket safely for reuse. Much like SpaceX's attempts to accomplish a similar feat, this proved unsuccessful.

Blue Origin will continue to develop its launch systems and crew capsule, and plans to sell tickets for manned suborbital flights in 2017.

*Photos courtesy Blue Origin*



# VWORP!2

## CONNECTING WHO, OLD AND NEW ...VOLUME TWO

In 1989, Doctor Who was cancelled with little hope of reprieve.

In 1996, a one-off Doctor Who TV movie renewed the legend.

In 2005 Doctor Who returned to TV triumphantly, and the BBC quickly made plans for several spin-off series.

In between, fandom came to the rescue.

With fan-produced amateur films and audio stories, the Doctor and friends actually had more adventures while the show was off the air than they could have while it was in production! When **Doctor Who** returned, it was these fans who were now writing some of his TV adventures.

VWORP!2 covers the years that **Doctor Who** was heard and not seen, via official audio adventures from **Big Finish** and the BBC. The three successful TV spin-offs to date – **Torchwood**, **The Sarah Jane Adventures**, and **K-9** – are also covered, along with updates on the 2012 and 2013 seasons of **Doctor Who**. Weighing in at a massive and comprehensive 524 pages, VWORP!2 continues your invaluable guide to the Doctor's travels.

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## EDITORIAL

## REBOOT THE UNIVERSE



As I watch more and more of my friends declaring on various social media outlets that they've decided to opt out of the "Disney era" of *Star Wars*, I'm going to peek out from behind something sturdy (not unlike BB-8 up there) and make an extremely unpopular admission.

When the news broke that the first *Star Wars* "anthology" film, *Rogue One*, would detail the theft of the original Death Star plans (leading directly into the original *Star Wars*), howls of protest went up in old-school fandom. "We already *know* how the plans were stolen!" cried anguished fans. "Kyle Katarn stole them in *Dark Forces*!"

Don't get me wrong, *Dark Forces* was a neat game...in 1995. Kyle Katarn is one of the better characters to emerge from what was known for many years as the Expanded Universe – basically, any non-movie *Star Wars* media, from video games and role-playing games to comics and novels. The "big bang" of the Expanded Universe emerged from two major publishing

events: the West End Games paper-and-dice RPG, and the trilogy of post-*Return Of The Jedi* novels by Timothy Zahn. (So much print fiction in the *Star Wars* universe followed and built on Zahn's books that these three initial books are now known as the "Thrawn Trilogy".)

And while many a beloved character has emerged from Lucas' publishing program - Mara Jade springs to mind here - I find myself very much in the minority in just not being in love with much of what has come from the beloved Expanded Universe. I wasn't that jazzed by Zahn's initial volley of three books, quite a few things in Dark Horse's comics left me with ambivalent feelings at best, and while a few of the books were to my taste, I checked out on post-*Jedi Star Wars* fiction when Chewbacca was offed for sheer shock value in the first New Jedi Order book. At that point, it seemed like the purveyors of new stories set in the original trilogy era were fighting desperately for relevance in the face of the then-current prequel trilogy.

To be fair, the prequel trilogy wasn't free from the same problems; fiction set in the last days of the Jedi order spanned the entire spectrum from sublime (the novel *Rogue Planet*) to the silly (how many conflicting accounts of the Clone Wars did we get between TV, comics, and prose?). There seemed to be some promise inherent in the closure of the prequel trilogy, leaving the 18-or-so-year gap between *Revenge Of The Sith* and *Star Wars* as fertile ground begging to be explored for new stories. The best of the *Star Wars* video games rewound things much further than the prequel trilogy, giving us the Jedi in their noble heyday (*Knights Of The Old Republic*).

But a lot of what came out just didn't connect with me. Part of it was the knowledge that Lucasfilm could - and *would* - invalidate any of it at any time. This made it difficult to invest much energy

into any particular story strand or characters. The "safe zone" seemed to be the unchronicled bulk of the Clone Wars in the gap between *Attack Of The Clones* and *Revenge Of The Sith*, but even there, the multiple versions of the Clone Wars, all at odds with one another to some degree, pointed to another disturbing phenomenon: it seemed that Lucasfilm just didn't care about setting ground rules for the universe, or vetting continuity - anything that could make a buck would be rubber-stamped.

And somehow Disney coming in and resetting continuity is *worse* than this?

Lucas' publishing program revived *Star Wars*

with a vengeance in the early 1990s, at roughly the same time that Virgin Publishing began to build its own shared universe around the recently-cancelled Doctor Who. The New Adventures novels, while not to every fan's taste, had the advantage of a carefully vetted continuity, hashed out among authors who would occasionally get together in the same room for dinner, drinks, and story-plotting jam sessions. By contrast, as the *Star Wars* fiction program expanded, the custodianship of the universe seemed sloppy by comparison. Launches of major new fiction ranges, such as *Shadows Of The Empire* and *New Jedi Order*, represented soft resets, attempts to get multiple

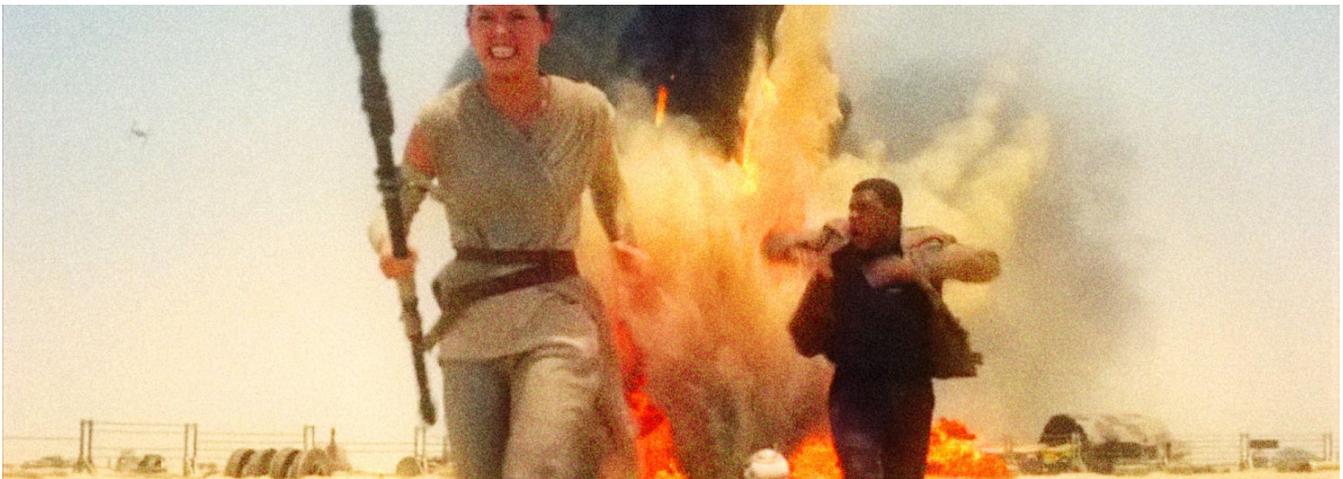
authors on the same page, but things would sooner or later spiral out of control.

Disney is doing - finally - what someone at Lucasfilm should've done



**"There they are - there's the lowlife scum who killed Mara Jade and Kyle Katarn!"**

better: they're laying down the law. This is the timeline, in broad strokes, full stop. Plenty of room is left for individual authors to concoct their own stories within that framework. And, best of all, it's all "official". *Battleground III*, the *Shattered Empire* comics, the criminally underrated *Star Wars: Rebels* animated series, the novels - they'll all line up, and someone at Lucasfilm/Disney is taking on the thankless task of being the janitor who keeps the grounds trimmed. And that means that someone, somewhere, is taking on the thankless task of being the point person that overwrought fans on the 'net are pointing to and saying "There they are - there's the lowlife scum who killed Mara Jade and Kyle Katarn!"



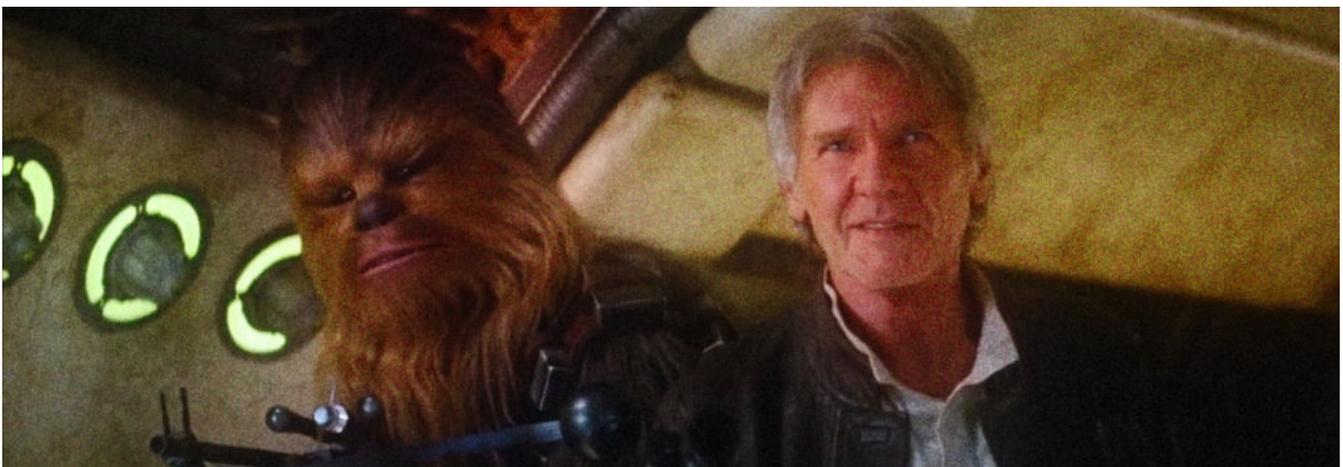
I wouldn't want to be that person.

But trust me, we're entering what *could* be (I'm leaving myself wiggle room to wait until *The Force Awakens* to pass judgement) a new golden age for *Star Wars*. This isn't to say that the reset of post-*Jedi* continuity doesn't make me nervous; *Star Trek* also needed a reset, and *The Force Awakens* director/co-writer J.J. Abrams made a train wreck out of a promising start. But Abrams doesn't seem to be sticking around after *The Force Awakens*; many of these macro-scale story and continuity decisions are not being made by him. Additionally, his co-writer on *The Force Awakens* is none other than Lawrence Kasdan, who co-wrote arguably the best installment of the original trilogy, *The Empire Strikes Back*. If we don't entirely trust Abrams,

do we not at least trust Kasdan's instincts?

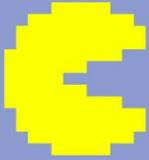
Me, I'm looking forward to the ride. Luke, Leia, Han and Chewie are back. (I'm still grumbling about the apparent lack of Lando, but at least he's shown up in *Rebels*. And speaking of *Rebels*, how about that reveal at the end of the first season that sent up a signal flare that the superb Clone Wars CGI series wasn't all for nought?) Artoo and Threepio are back, and they're joined by a little Katamari droid who seems to be the one thing on which we can all agree is neat about the new movies. With new, young freedom fighters at their side, they're poised to do battle with Kylo Ren and the First Order.

The Force, no doubt, is with them. Question is...are we?



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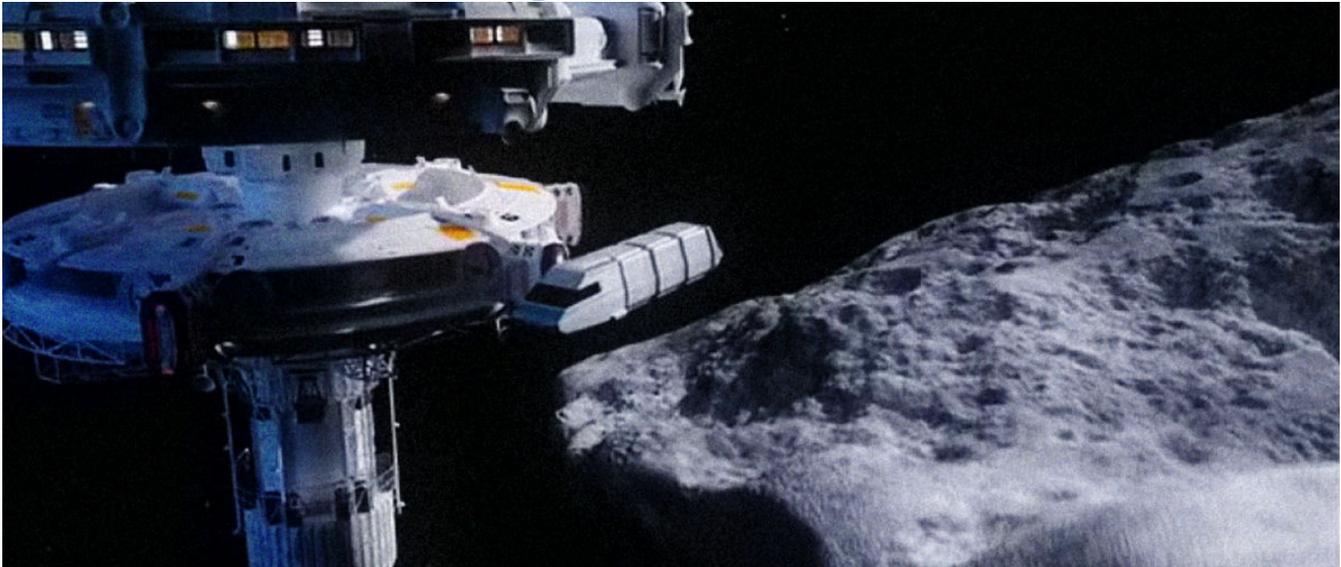
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## MOVIE REVIEWS

## STATION-KEEPING



**1970s cinematic space stations, then and now...were they *always* this lame?**

by Earl Green



**EARTH II** (1971 TV movie/Warner Archives MOD)

Much-loved by a loyal cult following that saw it hit the air as an ABC Sunday Night Movie in November 1971, *Earth II* has arrived on manufacture-on-demand DVD, ready for its unflagging fan following to own a copy at last - and ready for new eyes to see what all the fuss was about.

While time has added a rosy tint to many

### EARTH II (November 28, 1971)

An Apollo spacecraft is launched - despite the attempted interference of a saboteur - with three astronauts and the initial modules of a massive new space station aboard. President Durant of the United States asks American citizens to vote on the founding of a new "nation in space" using this space station as its capitol, and the vote is overwhelmingly in favor of creating a new spacefaring country: Earth II. The station grows in both size and population, setting out to be a completely democratic society in which any citizen can bring an issue up for a vote. But the first real test of Earth II's leadership arrives in the form of a Chinese orbital nuclear warhead. A team of astronauts from the station sets out to destroy it, but instead the warhead is left intact without the ability to receive commands from Earth. The ramifications of this event reveal a hawkish faction aboard Earth II, insisting that the weapon be kept for the station's protection. An opposing faction wants the weapon destroyed completely, fearing it represents too much power for anyone to use ethically. And one person, ignoring the democratic process, takes it upon herself to take the action she fears no one else will take, with disastrous consequences.

written by **William Read Woodfield**  
and **Allan Balter**

directed by **Tom Gries**  
music by **Lalo Schifrin**

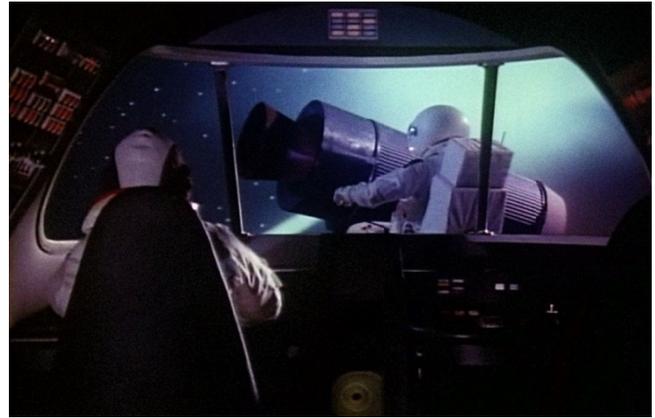
**Cast:** Gary Lockwood (David Seville), Scott Hylands (Jim Capa), Hari Rhodes (Loren Huxley), Tony Franciosa (Frank Karger), Mariette Hartley (Lisa Karger), Gary Merrill (Walter Dietrich), Inga Swenson (Ilyana Kovalefskii), Edward Bell (Anton Kovalefskii), Lew Ayres (President Charles Carter Durant), Brian Dewey (Matt Karger), Diana Webster (Hannah Young), Bart Burns (Stiner), John Carter (Hazlitt), Herbert Nelson (Chairman), Serge Tschermsch (Russian), Vince Cannon (Technician), David Sachs (Surgeon), Bob Hoy (West)

viewers' fond memories of *Earth II*, a fresh viewing doesn't help it. *Earth II* can't help but be what it is: a snapshot of the cultural assumptions of its time, trying to be forward-looking and hopeful. Granted, *any* movie is going to be a snapshot of its time, but some elements of *Earth II* are positively laughable by modern standards.

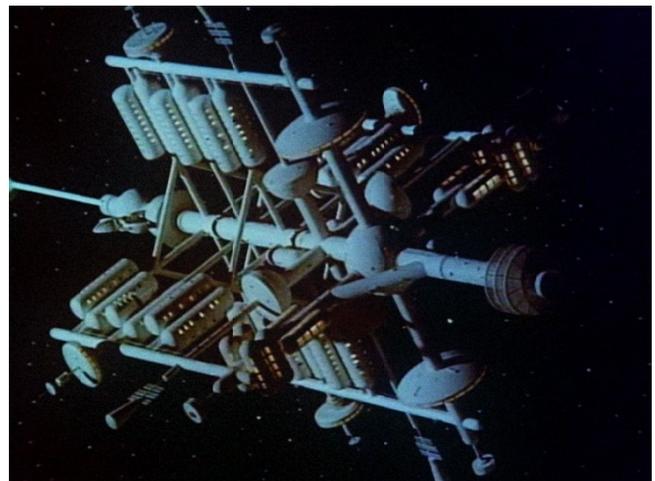
Those elements, by the way, do *not* include what was - for its time - some very nice effects work, considering that *Earth II* was done for TV (and likely with little more than a TV budget). But some of the basic foundations of the story don't stand up to scrutiny, including the idea that an Apollo spacecraft would be launched with three men aboard before a public vote could be taken on the notion of those three astronauts starting a new "nation in space" (as if anyone could actually just decide to do that). Furthermore, this decision is determined by measuring the intensity of lighting at night on the continental United States; those in other countries, especially undeveloped ones without nighttime lighting, just don't count. Apparently this "new country in space" has been set up to reflect and perpetuate American ideals from the get-go (and no one's going to protest that?). It would've been more logical to say that Earth II is a new American state that just happens to be in orbit, because in virtually every respect (despite a few token international characters aboard the space station), it's simply an extension of the United States.

Let's keep following that logic. So this new nation is established simply by asking the folks back home to turn on their lights at night if they approve. If Earth II is a sovereign nation and not simply an orbiting backup copy of the U.S., where does it get the resources to build a space station? It's obvious that the raw material for the huge orbital construct seen during much of

the movie wasn't contained within a single Saturn V rocket. So there had to be further materials and modules launched from Earth - again, presumably by the U.S.



And these are just plot setups in the first act, crumbling under their own weight. Disbelief has to be not just suspended, but discarded entirely to make it through the rest of the movie. Earth II's completely democratic form of government, which apparently demands and receives 100% participation, is almost as much of a fantasy as a nation-state space station that happens without support from Earth. (We might live in a less cynical, more ideal world if democracy really *did* work on that principle, or if there was at least more participation, but as it is, it's another underpinning of this movie's universe that just doesn't hold up.)

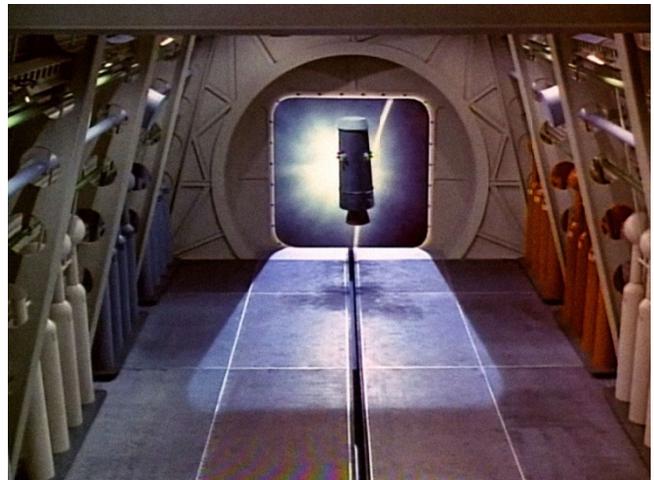




The cast is more than capable of bringing the story to life; Gary Lockwood is always one of those utterly likeable actors, and had some sci-fi cachet already, having starred in *2001: a space odyssey* and the second Star Trek pilot episode prior to appearing here. Mariette Hartley is a reliable performer saddled with a character whose function in the story reveals that *Earth II*'s writers weren't as forward-thinking as they wanted to believe: her character jettisons the nuclear warhead while the sun is in view, thinking that this is basically the same as disposing of it in the sun (spoiler: it instead starts falling into Earth's atmosphere, requiring a dangerous retrieval mission). *Earth II* is meant to be populated by the best and brightest from the planet that launched it; no one operating in space for any length of time would be so stupidly naïve about the physics involved. This is compounded by a condescending "awww honey, it's okay" pat on the head at the end of the movie.

One frequently hears the name of Gene Roddenberry invoked when this movie is mentioned. Roddenberry had nothing to do with *Earth II*, but apparently the hopeful vision of a future with true democracy and a space-nation devoted to peace reminds some viewers of Roddenberry's ideals as seen in Star Trek. (Personally, I think they're just remembering

*Genesis II*, which was a Roddenberry pilot, also co-starred Mariette Hartley, and was in many ways as flawed as *Earth II*.) But *Earth II* doesn't remind me of Roddenberry. It's not as meticulously thought out as Roddenberry's work tended to be. And where Roddenberry had notes for further stories that could be told with his *Genesis II* pilot, no such potential is visible with *Earth II* (which was apparently also a pilot for a series). This is a self-contained story that doesn't seem to hint at further stories. Any questions remaining about *Earth II* as a setting, as potential springboards for further storytelling, fall back into the same huge gaps of logic. Does *Earth II* trade with countries on Earth? What are its imports and exports? Can it ever truly be self-sustaining or is it forever beholden to one or more nations on Earth for its existence? What happens to its citizens if the space station suffers critical damage?



All of these are potential story starters, but there's no indication that the writers gave any of it much thought. The alpha and omega of *Earth II* seems to be the question "wouldn't it be groovy if a whole new utopian country started in outer space?" with no further thought into the science, politics or economics of such a situation. You don't end up with a story - it's just that question stretched out over two hours. ☹



### PIXELS (2015 / Sony Pictures)

Based on Patrick Jean's CGI short which brought a nostalgia rush to YouTube in 2010, *Pixels* is a workmanlike action film that takes the short's central conceit - an invasion of video game characters (complete with often-destructive tendencies) into the real world. A major motion picture, of course, has to fill more than three minutes, so some justification has to be constructed for this. (You're over an hour into the movie, and within grabbing distance of the end credits, before a sequence arrives that really resembles Patrick Jean's original work.)

The special effects bring such games as *Galaga*, *Centipede* and *Pac-Man* into the third dimension, one at a time as the initial battles against the aliens. It's not until the final battle, when Eddie and Ludlow have to fend off a massive, multi-game, multi-character assault as Sam must defeat his old nemesis Donkey Kong, that anything truly resembling Patrick Jean's original short is seen. As for the narrative hoops that *Pixels* jumps through to bring everything to that point, it's all very familiar - it's *Ghostbusters*, if you replace ghosts with alien-recreated video game characters. The working-class origins of the main characters is strongly reminiscent of

#### PIXELS (July 24, 2015)

Suburban pre-teens Sam Brenner, Ludlow and Cooper cross paths in 1982 at an arcade video game tournament. Sam's natural knack for detecting the games' movement patterns makes him a hot contender for the top spot, but in the finals, he loses to Eddie, a rude, crude kid who has bestowed upon himself the nickname "Fireblaster."

The sting of being merely second place haunts Sam throughout his life; he stumbles through a series of unambitious tech jobs, and during his latest gig as an audiovisual installer, he hits on one of his clients, an attractive (but divorced) suburban mom who turns out to be a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Navy. They cross paths again when Sam is summoned to the White House; his old buddy Cooper is now the President of the United States, and needs Sam's video game expertise when a mysterious attack on a military base at Guam bears striking similarities to the enemy attack patterns of the video game Galaga. Ludlow, now a shut-in conspiracy theorist, emerges with what he believes is a message from an alien race: they have seen a transmission of the 1982 arcade tournament, along with other samples of Earth culture of the 1980s, and have interpreted it as a declaration of war. Earth has now lost a battle and lost one "life"; two more losses mean game over for the planet.

screenplay by **Tim Herlihy** and **Timothy Dowling**  
based on the short film by **Patrick Jean**  
directed by **Chris Columbus**  
music by **Henry Jackman**

**Cast:** Adam Sandler (Brenner), Kevin James (Cooper), Michelle Monaghan (Violet), Peter Dinklage (Eddie), Josh Gad (Ludlow), Matt Lintz (Matty), Brian Cox (Admiral Porter), Sean Bean (Corporal Hill), Jane Krakowski (First Lady Jane Cooper), Dan Aykroyd (1982 Championship MC), Ashley Benson (Lady Lisa), Denis Akiyama (Professor Iwatani), Daryl Hall (himself), John Oates (himself), Matt Frewer (Max Headroom)

Peter Venkman's barely-organized band of paranormal investigators. *Pixels* hits the beats you would expect, and is fairly paint-by-numbers in its plotting.

But given that *Pixels* is not only an Adam

Sandler flick, but an Adam Sandler flick that has the unenviable task of trying to flesh out a nearly-plotless CGI effects demo that clocked in at under five minutes, you can't expect *Pixels* to be *Casablanca*; arguably, you can't even expect it to be *Tron*. You're here to see Sandler, Josh Gad, Kevin James and Peter Dinklage rattle off wisecracks and catchphrases, and then take a break to take part in dizzyingly colorful CGI action setpieces. That's the movie. That's the whole movie. If you're expecting

instincts rather than having been given fine-grain direction. If you go into *Pixels* wanting to see some old favorites breathed into menacing new CGI life for some often lowbrow-funny big-screen boss battles, it will not disappoint. (The humor is not only lowbrow, but out of step with the times – it's as if the script fell back in time along with the game characters.) If you go into *Pixels* wanting more, you might as well let go of the joystick, walk away, and declare "game over." *Pixels* could have been better, sure, but

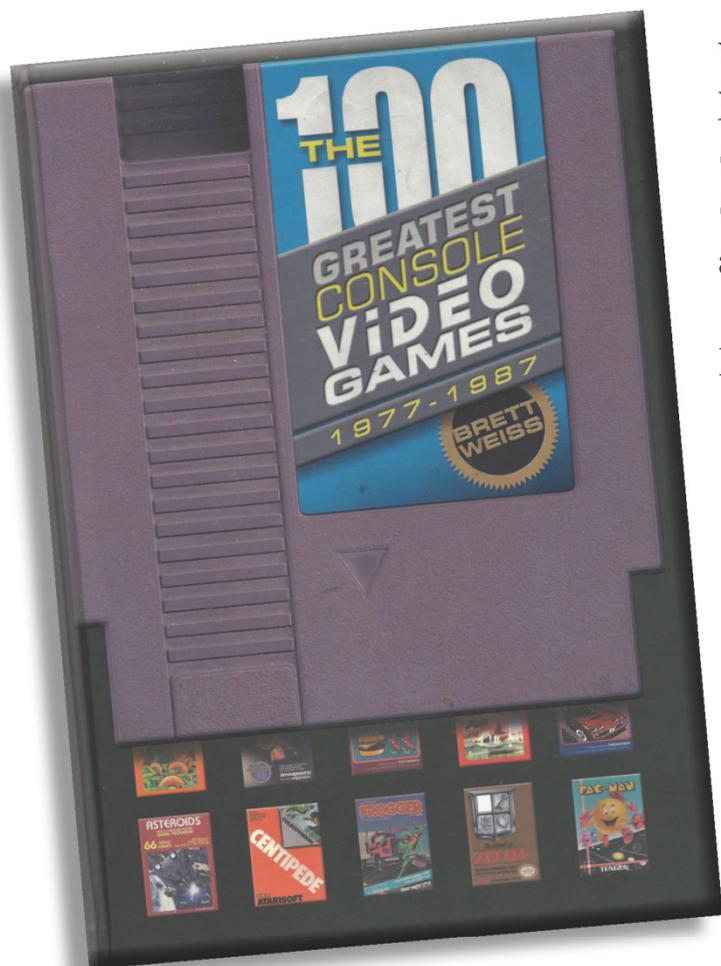


something smarter than that, *Tron Legacy* is still out there on Blu-Ray. Chris Columbus of *Gremlins* fame brings some style to the live-action proceedings, but ultimately he has to service the effects. Sandler and company appear to have been left to their own comedic

it's entertaining in its own right and certainly could have been worse, and is more fun than the snarky crowdsourced movie critique machine that is the internet might have led you to believe. It's not high art, but like the games that inspired it, it's harmless shoot-em-up fun. **C+**



# A GAME-BY-GAME history of the interactive entertainment industry

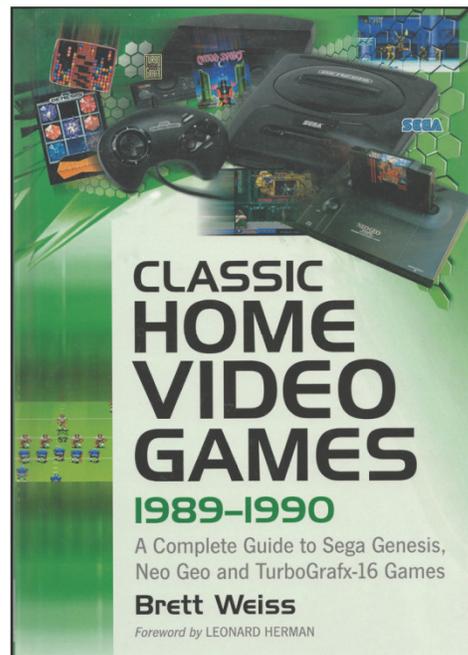
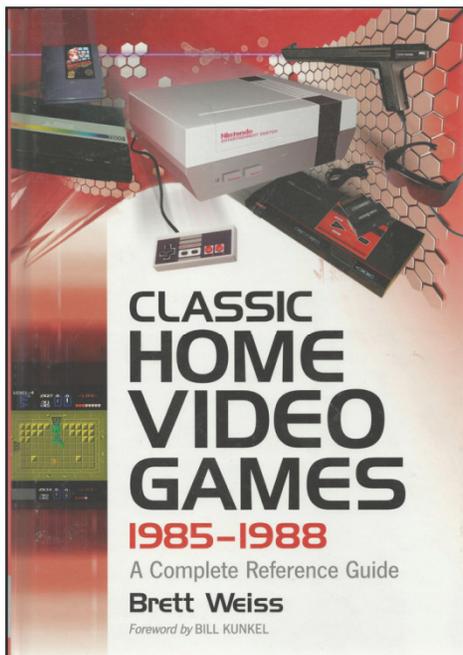
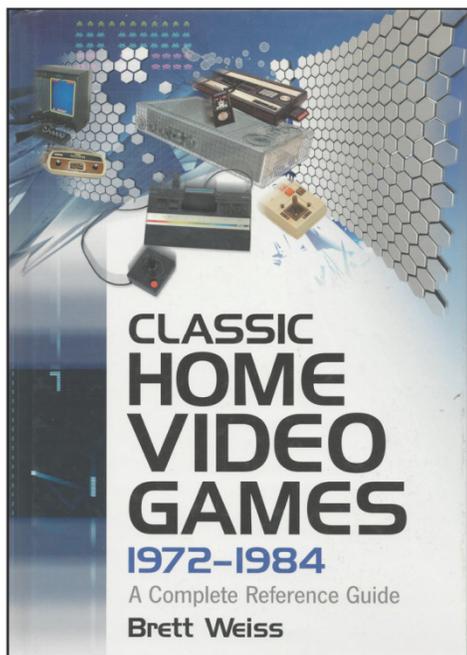


Written by noted video game author and historian Brett Weiss, *The 100 Greatest Console Video Games: 1977-1987* and the *Classic Home Video Games* book series are available on Amazon.com.

For more info, check out Brett's website:  
[www.BrettWeissWords.com](http://www.BrettWeissWords.com)

*Author Brett Weiss knows his stuff... a respected name in the classic gaming community... he provides insightful behind-the-scenes information... suitable for just about any type of video game fan.*

—Dave “The Video Game Critic” Mrozek





**WILLIAM SHATNER PRESENTS  
CHAOS ON THE BRIDGE**  
(2015 / Wacky Doodle Productions)

It seems, on the surface, to be a somewhat suspect setup - William Shatner, who not only never appeared in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and was initially critical of it, doing a documentary about the multiple high-stakes tugs-of-war taking place behind that show's early years. Adding to the raised-eyebrow factor here is that several key players in that drama, especially one Gene Roddenberry, are no longer around to defend themselves. From the pre-release blurbs and the trailer, it seemed as though *Chaos On The Bridge* was going to be an hour-long gossip session and smear campaign.

To my surprise, however, while it can be said to be guilty of the gossiping charge, *Chaos* manages to be a fond look back at TNG's gestation. Well, *mostly* fond. It's a widely-repeated piece of "received wisdom" in fandom that TNG's first two years were wildly uneven (for the record, the



author of this review happens to think season two was among the show's best), due in no small part to constant power struggles and conflicts behind the scenes. Promises made and broken to his loyal writing superstars from the original *Star Trek* left Roddenberry with few allies, failing health, and left him relying on new producers such as Maurice Hurley and Rick Berman, who were neophytes to Roddenberry's universe. (It's also pointed out that Roddenberry had changed the ground rules of his fictional universe between *Star Trek*'s last small-screen adventure and the first installment of TNG.) Add to that Gene's personal attorney meddling in every creative aspect possible, and it'd be a comedy of errors if it hadn't significantly altered real careers and the course of the fictional franchise.



Particularly fascinating is the appearance of former Paramount Pictures president John Pike, who helped to broker the deal that put Roddenberry in charge of *Star Trek* once more (fun fact: Paramount owned the *Trek* intellectual property outright, and only roped Roddenberry into the new show to win fan approval). Pike reveals a lot of delicious inside info here, including how quickly he regretting putting Roddenberry back in the captain's chair of his fictional starship. Widely reported to be battling numerous addiction issues at the time, Roddenberry had to hurriedly endure a crash rehab program in order to birth the new *Star Trek* at all. For every behind-the-scenes battle

we already knew about, at least two more were taking place at any given time, undoubtedly driving up many a Paramount exec's blood pressure, Pike's included. Shatner is fair and even in his coverage, with one particularly interesting segment showing that Pike and series star Patrick Stewart have wildly different memories of a dispute that could have made or broken Stewart's career in the States. Most of the TNG cast is interviewed, including Diana Muldaur, who offers an interesting critique on the differences between classic Trek and TNG from an actor's perspective (she appeared in both). Notable by their absence are Brent Spiner, Marina Sirtis, and Michael Dorn, though this is offset by behind-the-camera tales from the likes of Tracy Tormé (who recounts the struggle to get the infamously dark episode *Conspiracy* made), David Gerrold, D.C. Fontana, Melinda Snodgrass, Susan Sackett, Rick Berman, and the last on-camera interview with Maurice Hurley (season 1-2 showrunner) before his death this year.



Much is said about Michael Piller, whose new style of running the show when he took over from Hurley turned the show's fortunes around, and virtually everything said about Piller is glowing praise; as Piller is also no longer with us, his era is represented by such now-big names as Ronald D. Moore (*Outlander*, *Battlestar Galactica*), Brannon Braga (*Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey*, *Salem*, *24*), and *Deep Space Nine*

showrunner Ira Steven Behr (*The 4400*, *Alphas*), who witnessed plenty of nuttiness as incoming writers, as Piller tried to wean the writing room away from Hurley's more adversarial style.



Much mention is also made of Roddenberry's lawyer, the also deceased Leonard Maizlish, who made himself everyone's enemy during the show's first season for issuing memos to which he signed Roddenberry's name. This is the one instance where the gossip really gets nasty: nobody who worked on TNG appears to have liked the man. Gerrold's fantasy of hurling the lawyer out of an open window is funny, but it's "nervous laughter" funny. Wow.

Running the risk of being a deadly dull series of talking heads, *Chaos* frequently cuts away to nicely-drawn animated interludes, or vintage still photos given a 3-D effect, often done in a "wild western" style befitting the frequent references to high-stakes poker in Pike's dealings with Roddenberry (also playing into the *Enterprise-D* crew's frequent poker games). It would've been all too easy to make the graphics "spacey"; taking a less obvious road produces interesting results.

*Chaos On The Bridge* can't replace the in-depth, studio-vetted documentaries from the TNG Blu-Ray box sets, but it's an essential, less official, less guarded side dish – a perfect companion piece with a dark sense of humor. **A-**



**SPACE STATION 76** (2014 / Sony Pictures)

There was a lot of film festival buzz about how great this movie looked - the authentic retro-sci-fi set design and cinematography, the frozen-in-the-1970s costume and hair design, and so on. What there wasn't a lot of film festival buzz about, however, was how *funny* *Space Station 76* is. This omission is probably largely due to the fact that, despite all of the effort poured into the movie's visual aspects, it's awkwardly unfunny.

*Space Station 76* crams as many stereotypical relationship problems and outdated "I'm OK, You're OK" pop psychology as it can into a bottle, shakes it up, and pours it all over those sets. I would've been fine with a character dramedy that just happens to take place on a space station. *Space Station 76*, on the other hand, is what I'd expect if the script from a humdrum, unremarkable family drama of the '70s was lifted and dropped into a sci-fi setting, with the writers intent on trying to milk irony out of it that simply isn't that funny.



The only laugh-out-loud line in the whole movie lands ten minutes before the end credits roll, and it's hard to sympathize with any

### SPACE STATION 76 (September 19, 2014)

Jessica Marlowe arrives at space station Omega 76 to begin a tour of duty as the station's second-in-command under uptight Captain Glenn, whose previous second-in-command left under mysterious (and much-gossiped-about) circumstances. She meets the station's other personnel and spouses in rapid succession, including Ted and his wife Misty, the latter of whom has an oddly distant relationship with both her husband and their daughter, and Steve and Donna, both eager to move on to a better posting than Omega 76. Jessica, unable to have children of her own, quickly befriends Ted and his daughter, as Misty grows jealous of her presence. Glenn continually questions Jessica's competence, until she realizes that his relationship with her predecessor was more than just professional. She finds that her feelings for one of her new crewmates are entering that territory as well.

screenplay by **Jennifer Elise Cox**  
**Sam Pancake**  
**Jack Plotnick**  
**Kali Rocha**  
 and **Mike Stoyanov** based on their stage play  
 directed by **Jack Plotnick**  
 music by **Steffan Fantini** and **Marc Fantini**

**Cast:** Patrick Wilson (Glenn), Liv Tyler (Jessica), Matt Bomer (Ted), Marisa Coughlan (Misty), Kylie Rogers (Sunshine), Kali Rocha (Donna), Jerry O'Connell (Steve), Matthew Morrison (Daniel), Keir Dullea (Mr. Marlowe), Ryan Gaul (Chuck), Victor Togunde (James), Jonny Jay (Trucker), Mike Stoyanov (Dr. Bot), Susan Currie (Steve's Mom), Hart Keathley (Donna's Baby), Anna Sophie Burglund (Star Angel), Sam Pancake (Saul), Katherine Ann McGregor (Janice), Julia E.L. Wood (Susan)

characters who aren't the seven-year-old daughter of one of the crew couples. The only other endearing character, a robot psychologist, blurts counseling catchphrases based on keywords unwittingly uttered by its patients.

Costuming, setting, and occasionally ponderous pacing parody nearly every major sci-fi specimen of the pre-*Star Wars* '70s. *Space: 1999*, *Silent Running*, and *Logan's Run* serve as visual reference points, as do the vector graphics of Atari's *Asteroids*. But retro reference points don't make a movie any more than effects do. It also takes more than licensing Todd Rundgren and Ambrosia tunes to evoke the 1970s.

The intersection of "sci-fi" and "retro" occurs more often as the genre's footprint on the pop culture landscape gains maturity and acceptance. But that intersection will have to produce more interesting results than this. **D+**

## CONVENTION REPORT

**BUBONICON 2015****August 28-30 2015, Albuquerque, New Mexico**

by Charles Pearson



If it's August then it's Bubonicon time here in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the annual local Science Fiction convention. This is the 47<sup>th</sup> Bubonicon, which was originally called "New Mexican" until 1971 when it was noted by organizers that nearly half of the cases of the Bubonic plague in this country occurred in New Mexico. As a result they renamed the con and the mascot for the convention is Perry Rhodent, a rat.

This year's theme is "Women of Wonder" honoring pioneering writers, artists and characters. Subsequently, the guests of honor included writer Tamora Pierce, writer Catherynne "Cat" M. Valente and Artist Ruth Sanderson.

Bubonicon is packed with events, far more than can be seen by just one person. These events include: opening and closing ceremonies, science and science fiction panels, talks with authors who usually read a selection from their latest work, fan game shows, costume contests, film screenings, and even high tea with the artists and authors. If you would rather play a game of Catan, D&D or other board and card games, there are two rooms set aside just for that with other players. So many events in so little time.

The first panel I attended was titled "50 Years of Dune" with Ben Bova, Jane Lindskold, and John Maddox as panelists, and Walter Jon Williams as the moderator. Mostly they commented on the influence Dune has had on Science fiction but the big item of discussion was Frank Herbert's main inspiration for Dune: the book Sabres of Paradise: Conquest and Vengeance in the Caucasus, written by Lesley Blanch. This book, published in 1960, discusses the people of the Caucuses and their struggle against the invading Russians. Passages from Sabres were read by panelists and compared to similar passages in Dune. In some cases it is clear that Herbert simply copied text from Sabres. This was a very interesting panel and a great start for the convention.

Next up, I and others spent 55 minutes with Melinda M. Snodgrass, former Star Trek: TNG story editor and science fiction author. Before reading a selection from her latest work, Melinda mentioned that she was interviewed by William Shatner for his documentary *Chaos On The Bridge* (see pg. 20). She noted that he is a very smart man and asked her some very hard questions. A couple of times he put her on the spot with her role in TNG. Both Bill and Melinda share their love of horse riding and she mentioned that she rode with him once and

currently, her horse is stabled not far from Shatner's ranch and she hopes to ride with him again soon.

Melinda mentioned that she was approached by the producers of the fan series *Star Trek: Renegades* to write a script for them. However, it is not a WGA sanctioned project and Melinda is a WGA member, so she had to decline.

When asked what she did to inspire her writing her answer was: role playing games. She, George R.R. Martin, S.M. Stirling, Walter Jon Williams and other contributors of the *Wild Cards* series would regularly play RPGs and from those experiences they would write stories for the *Wild Cards* series. D&D was mentioned, but Melinda also said that George would make up entire RPGs on the fly and they would go from there.



Author and former *Omni* magazine editor Ben Bova

Next I spent 55 minutes with Ben Bova, a man incapable of saying bad things about other people. When asked about his experience with *Omni* magazine, he described it as “wonderful”. He described Bob Guccione as a “fantastic publisher” and was impressed with his willingness to spend large amounts of money on the venture. It was clear to Ben that Bob's wife, Kathy Keeton, was the real brains behind the magazine but that did not lessen Bob's support

for the project. Ben was privately relieved when they renamed the magazine from *Nova* to *Omni* due to a law suit filed by the PBS TV show of the same name. “*Nova* edited by Bova” sounded weird to him.

Ben Bova agreed completely with John Campbell's approach to editing: find authors who may not be great at world building but were good at writing. They knew how to write – which is the most important thing – but needed guidance from editors like Campbell and Bova to complete their world building.

Ben also said he learned a lot about writing by reading selections from the “slush pile”. To be more accurate, he learned how not to write since he was able to see where the various writers would fail in their works and why their writings were so bad.



Toastmistress Mary Robinette Kowal

The opening ceremonies to the convention are normally dull but Mary Robinette Kowal made it *very* interesting when she read the names of the organizers, artists and authors in her “sexy” voice. She got a big reaction from the crowd

when she read S.M. Stirling's name as "S&M Stirling."

The panel on strong female characters was interesting. It started with a debate on what a strong female character is but they could not reach a consensus. One observation is that readers tend to expect the strong female characters to marry at the end of the novel. Cat Valente stated that her characters would not let her do that, they would rather race across the galaxy and continue their adventures.



Author Cat Valente

Strong male characters having a relationship with a strong female character? The consensus of the panel: *bad idea*. If it did happen, sparks would fly and it would not last long.

In his 55 minutes with the fans, Dan Abraham (half of the James S.A. Corey writing team) discussed and promoted the *Expanse* books and upcoming TV series on SyFy. He was asked if there were any plans to have any crossover episodes with SyFy's *Killjoys* and *Dark Matter* but he doubted it due to limitations from the various contracts in place.

The big event of the show was 80 minutes with George R. R. Martin. He arrived with a TV crew



Lights, camera, George

in tow and stated from the start that he will not answer questions about when book six of the *Song of Ice and Fire* series (AKA *Game of Thrones*) will be published (he doesn't know). He introduced his "minions" who've been a big help in organizing his activities and keeping him on track – he's a very busy man.

George then read a selection from *The Winds of Winter*, book six of *A Song of Ice and Fire*. All I can say is that it was mostly battle scenes with trebuchets blasting castles and so on. Lots of blood and fighting and a very interesting read. Don't look for a YouTube of the reading: George asked fans to refrain from filming the reading and his minions will ask you to stop and scour the internet for such videos and have them removed.



Daniel Abraham, half of writing team James S.A. Corey (*The Expanse*)



*George R.R. Martin*

The Q&A got weird for a moment when a woman holding a plush toy snail spoke as the snail and asked George if he knew about space aliens sampling Ronald Reagan's DNA and using it to invade Earth (or something like that). George was unable to answer and quickly pointed to the next raised hand...it was an entertaining 80 minutes.

The best time with an author, however, was 55 minutes with Mary Robinette Kowal. Not only is she an accomplished sci-fi author but she is also a puppeteer (attended the Sesame Street Workshop) and a professional audiobook reader. She started the session by handing out hand fans – the kind Jane Austin characters would use – to the audience and gave a demonstration on how to quickly open and close them. Next she openly promoted the book “Bluescreen” by Dan Wells and declared it the best genre young adult novel currently out there. She then asked who would like the book and gave it to an audience member who was familiar with the author.

Next she talked about puppetry. Earlier in the day she gave a presentation on puppetry and discussed the different types of puppetry. Here, she took out a T. Rex toy she bought at a store

and used it to give a puppetry demonstration. Very entertaining and it highlighted her skill at puppetry. Her all-time favorite job, if she could ever get it, would be to work on Sesame Street.

Next she gave a reading from her latest work, and followed that with a discussion about the audiobook business. Mary is very busy in that business and has read for dozens of books including her own works. She mentioned that, even if you read your own work, you still have to audition for it: union rules. Typically they read about 20 pages a day and get paid about \$250 per read hour, and a book can take 7-10 days to complete.

She followed that discussion with the common mistakes authors make when they read their works in public: they read too fast, don't speak loud enough and have a tendency to drone on. She gave a demo and asked the audience to participate in an exercise on which words to emphasize in each sentence read. It was a very interesting demonstration that reading for audiobooks is technically more complicated than one would think.



*Say hello to Mary Robinette Kowal and her little friend*



Scientists in Science panel: moderator David Lee Summers, Los Alamos scientist Catherine Plesko, Jeffe Kennedy, M.T. Reiten, Daniel Abraham and Josh Gentry

The Sunday morning Science talk (“It’s Alive: Scientists in Science Fiction”) was interesting but not terribly remarkable. The panel did credit Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* with setting the standard for mad scientists, but also mentioned that scientists in sci-fi have changed, and you are more likely to see them as heroes now (the TV adaptation of *The Flash* was mentioned). Sadly, the panel was hijacked for a long seven minutes when an audience member went on a long vague rant about animal testing instead of asking a question.

Victor Milan read a selection from his newest book, *The Dinosaur Lords*, which is the first book of a series. It’s his best work since *The Cybernetic Samurai*, which won the Prometheus award in 1985. Be on the lookout for this book – it’s worth your time, especially if you like dinosaurs.

55 minutes with M.T. Reiten was very interesting since I was the only audience member in attendance! As a result we had a great discussion about military sci-fi and he read a chapter on a book he is currently working on. Mr. Reiten is a scientist working at Los Alamos and does not have a lot of time for writing right now; his novel will take a while before it is published. I found his prose very descriptive and I felt like I was in the battlefield with the protagonist and his “puppies” (AI robot warriors).

Mr. Reiten is a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, and recalled stories from his deployments. He

asked me, since I was an engineer, what kind of work I would expect to do if I joined the Navy as an officer. “Engineering work,” was my answer. “Correct.” Same question about the Army. Engineering work? *Nope*. You are an officer and you do what they tell you, even if it has nothing to do with engineering. That spoke volumes about his experiences.

Overall, a very interesting experience and I look forward to seeing more of his work. He currently has a story in S.M. Stirling’s latest book from the Change series, *The Change: Tales of Downfall and Rebirth*. I would love to see his experiences show up in print, even if they’re disguised a science fiction. Check out his website: <http://www.mtreiten.com/>



Victor Milan reads a passage from *The Dinosaur Lords*

The young adult panel (“Forever Young: Young Adult vs. Grown-Up Fiction”) quickly blurred the lines between YA and “grown up” fiction.



I got confused and I think the audience did too. Surprisingly, there are more adults reading YA novels than young adults. (Actually, perhaps not that surprising, when you consider that many parents wish to review the books before they let their kids read them.)



"Young Adult vs. Grown-Up Fiction" moderator Tamora Pierce with panelists Darynda Jones and Betsy James

Throughout the convention there was a strong interest on fans' part in the "[puppygate](#)" scandal earlier in the year, before and during Worldcon, which presented the Hugo Awards. When asked, the authors refused to make any specific

comments. George R.R. Martin declared that everything he has to say on the subject is mentioned in his blog (<http://grrm.livejournal.com>). Ben Bova had nothing specific to say, but he agreed with a comment made by a fan that this kind of thing has been going on for decades and the only difference now is that it is being reported widely by twitter, Facebook, blogs and other modern media. John Scalzi's blog (<http://whatever.scalzi.com/>) was also mentioned throughout the various discussions on the subject.

About 850 people attended Bubonic this year, an increase from last year. Despite the relatively small numbers (the maximum that could have attended was 1400, due to fire code restrictions), the place was packed and there was never a dull moment. If you happen to be in the Albuquerque area in late August next year, I recommend that you check it out.



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## TV REVIEWS

## OTHER SPACES &amp; PLACES



by Earl Green and Robert Parson

### OTHER SPACE (Yahoo! Screen webseries)

After suffering through *Space Station 76* (see *Movie Reviews*, page 20), I was really reluctant to try out another attempt at sci-fi comedy. There's a perception that only the British can do this right, but for every *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* or *Red Dwarf*, even they have their *Hyperspaces* and *Come Back, Mrs. Noahs*. It's hard to balance it just right, and to maintain that precarious balance. American projects have an even spottier track record in that regard.

Early on, Yahoo.com's *Other Space* got some buzz for adding *Mystery Science Theater 3000* founding cast members Joel Hodgson and Trace Beaulieu to its roster (the latter providing puppetry and voice work for a robot character), in addition to the buzz it had already gotten

simply for being the creation of *Freaks & Geeks* creator Paul Feig. Closer to its premiere date, some early reviews labeled it the latest American attempt to copy *Red Dwarf*, bringing to mind queasy memories of UPN's miserable *Homeboys In Outer Space*.

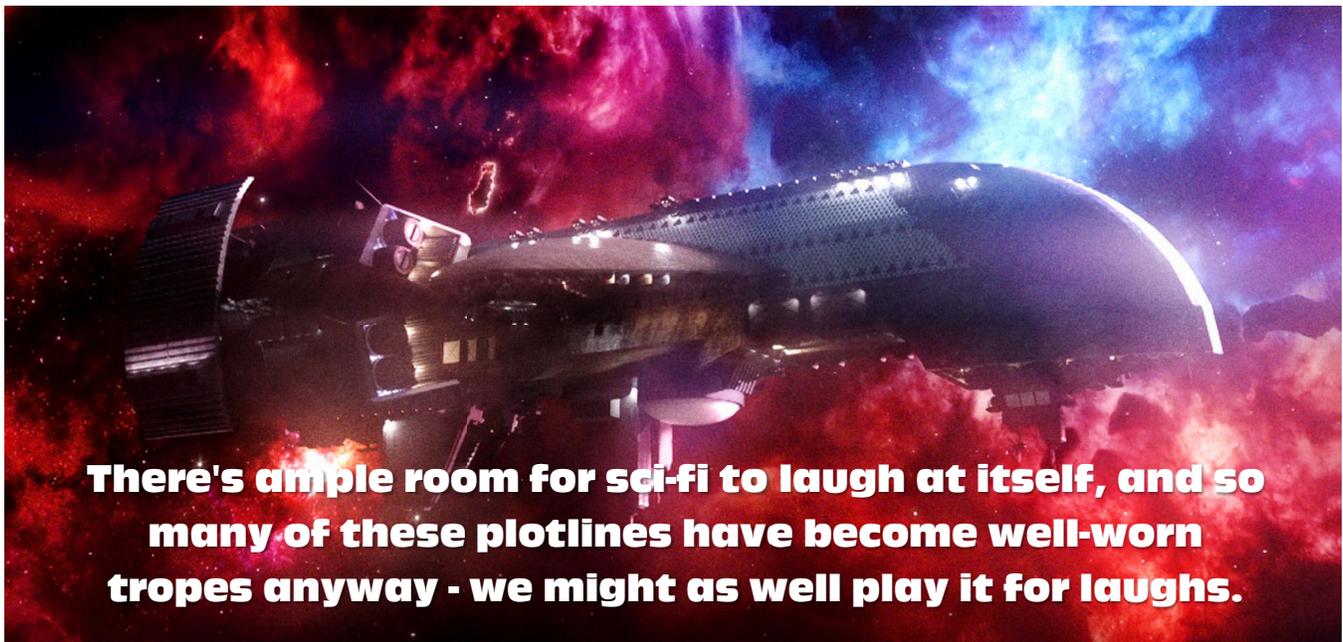


Karan Soni IS *Other Space's* Captain Stewart Lipinski

But while *Other Space* can claim to be in something of the same wheelhouse as *Red Dwarf* - a science fiction situation comedy - it's better than most attempts at this particular genre mash-up. Combining tried-and-true elements of the modern workplace sitcom (think *The Office*, with emphasis on the American adaptation rather than the original UK version) with a format through which genre darlings like *Star Trek: Voyager* and Gene Roddenberry's *Andromeda* can be skewered, *Other Space* passes the smell test in at least one regard: it's funny. If you're familiar with *Community*, you're familiar with the tone and tempo of the humor; *Other Space* simply sets all of this in a universe of alien incursions, tunnels into alternate dimensions, and so on.

*Trek*: TNG's *Conundrum* episode, or *Torchwood*'s *Adam*). There's ample room for sci-fi to laugh at itself, and so many of these plotlines have become well-worn tropes anyway - we might as well play it for laughs.

The cast has buckets of charm on display, and their comedic timing in ensemble scenes is a thing of beauty, which is a real accomplishment when one cast member is only seen on a screen and another is providing the voice for a robotic puppet. While the second episode centers on the untested crewmembers getting familiar with each other, the ensemble cast is knocking it out of the park, attacking the scripts with relish. It would be too easy to single out Hodgson and Beaulieu, the "known quantities" of the cast who arrived



Is the science fiction particularly original? Not by a long shot. The premise of the entire show is designed to parody such lost-in-space shows as *Voyager*, *Space: 1999*, and yes, *Lost In Space*. The second episode has a good laugh at the expense of the old "new crewmember who everyone loves, but is actually an alien who has brainwashed everyone" chestnut (think *Star*

with their own genre cred, for praise, but both of them are wisely deployed as strategic weapons: they're almost guaranteed scene-stealers, and can achieve big laughs with the most fleeting of scenes (see also: Zalian obsessing over an illusory tuna sandwich). I'm a bit less enamored with the handheld-camera shooting style - the flavor of the day of 21<sup>st</sup> century TV is starting to make

every show look the same, and if there's a show that should have a unique look, it's this one.

The sets are obviously constructed on a tight budget, but they're also pretty clever. The use of large HD screens in place of windows (and early in the third episode, it's acknowledged that these are screens rather than windows or portholes) is inspired, and solves a huge number of logistical problems without green screen compositing, such as the enormous amount of work that match-moving a composited "window view" would require with



Other Space's shooting style. And screens instead of windows makes sense with fictional logistics as well: a solid hull with screens relaying views from exterior cameras is a simpler, safer, more robust design than a ship with the space equivalent of giant, fragile bay windows all over the place (the norm for most filmed SF). The "cheap" sets also convey that this ship is well past its glory days.

Other Space is off to a promising start; here's hoping that Yahoo! and Feig get enough eyeballs on this project to merit a second season. -EG **B+**



## **ASCENSION** (Syfy original miniseries)

Part of an ongoing sea change at Syfy, Ascension is a production that effectively straddles the

fence between the old guard at the network (modern-day location-based shows with sci-fi elements, i.e. Eureka, Warehouse 13, etc.) and the new (actual high-concept science fiction with

spaceships and other planets and all that expensive stuff). Crafty marketing sold viewers on a show about a generational starship that left Earth during the Kennedy administration, with a crew of humans whose culture, values and worldview started in the early 1960s and have since developed in an entirely different direction. Only the best of the best were picked for this mission; the best of the best have since died, and the starship Ascension is now run by the descendants of that carefully selected gene pool.



That's what all of the show's pre-broadcast marketing had to say about Ascension; what virtually none of it mentioned was that there's an entire modern-day story strand which is just as important, if not moreso, for it encompasses the "generational ship" story entirely. Helpfully, this frames the story with scenes that can be shot in office buildings, parking lots, and other existing (and therefore affordable) locations, offsetting the attention and money lavished on the opulent (but low-tech) starship sets. Some might feel that this massive twist in the story is a cheat, but it's an element of the story that helps to give it some context.

The happenings aboard the "ship" - alliances and betrayals, conflict between the rigidly defined social classes, and the first murder in the ship's entire history - are gripping stuff. Ascension is adult drama, complete with sexual power plays, affairs and secrets aplenty, in much the same way that Syfy's *Battlestar Galactica* was. (The presence of *Galactica* veteran Tricia "Six" Helfer as a master manipulator only heightens these similarities.) The drama outside the ship

is more of an X-Files flavor, conspiracy theories, internet wackos, double-crosses and all. All of the treachery, however, leaves me with the same complaint that I've had about modern drama for much of the past decade: by the end of the show, nearly every character has blood on their hands, or is left with a relationship on the brink of

imploding. Even the youngest person aboard Ascension, a pre-teen girl with psychokinetic powers that attract a dangerous amount of interest from those outside the ship, accidentally kills at least one person with those powers, possibly two by

the closing credits on the third night. Is there anyone to feel comfortable rooting for in this show? Is there a shred of nobility anywhere?

This is a major concern going forward if Syfy renews Ascension either as a second miniseries or as a weekly series. Like too many other recent genre dramas - *Lost*, *The 4400*, even the desperately grim final season of the aforementioned *Battlestar* revival - Ascension could have a sense of awe and wonder about it, and could have a lot to say about the human condition, but instead trades it in for the dreary darkness that's been in fashion ever since American TV started reacting to 9/11. There is one humdinger of a "wow" moment in the final scene, but it's too little, too late - so late, in fact, that it feels tacked-on. It's clearly meant to be a giant question mark for an ongoing series to answer, but Ascension needs to lighten up if it intends to attract a wider audience than the miniseries. With all of that darkness and treachery encoded into its DNA, though, it would be a massive course change for a ship that's already going nowhere. -EG **C+**

# TATOOINE OR EARTH?



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## **DAREDEVIL** (Netflix webseries)

He's not quite as well-known as Spider-Man, or the X-Men, or the Hulk, but Daredevil has been one of Marvel Comics' most enduring characters. His origin is fairly well known: as a boy he was blinded when a truck crashed, splashing toxic chemicals into his eyes. These same chemicals, however, also enhanced his other senses. He grew and was mentored to sharpen those senses, and was trained to fight. And became...a lawyer. But sometimes justice demands action that the law cannot provide.

This Netflix original series is set in the shadow of the Marvel Cinematic Universe; you might even say it *is* the shadow since it's also heavily influenced by the film noir movement. Set in the rough Hell's Kitchen area of New York, there's an ominous sense of foreboding over every person and even the sunshine of day can't seem to remove the darkness in some corners.

This show *hurts*. Every punch thrown, every

slash of a knife, every bullet that rips through flesh. This isn't the same sort of disconnected injury and death of the big budget tent-pole theatrical features. In Daredevil, everything is personal. Bones crunch, people bleed. Wounds are painfully grievous and death can be agonizingly brutal. Even if the entire first season was a waste, which it is not, the fight scene at the end of the second episode alone would make up for it. Daredevil is the UFC of scripted television.

Every good hero needs a good villain. Wilson Fisk, with his plans to create a better Hell's Kitchen, is more than up to the task. Murder, extortion, drugs, and bribery are just a few of the tools he uses to bring about his vision. The underlying menace that Vincent D'Onofrio brought to Law and Order: Criminal Intent is boiling over in Daredevil. It's played with a wide range of nuance. Fisk is a person who does things, but is uncomfortable dealing with people and relationships. There are moments of real compassion for the character, as despicable as he is.

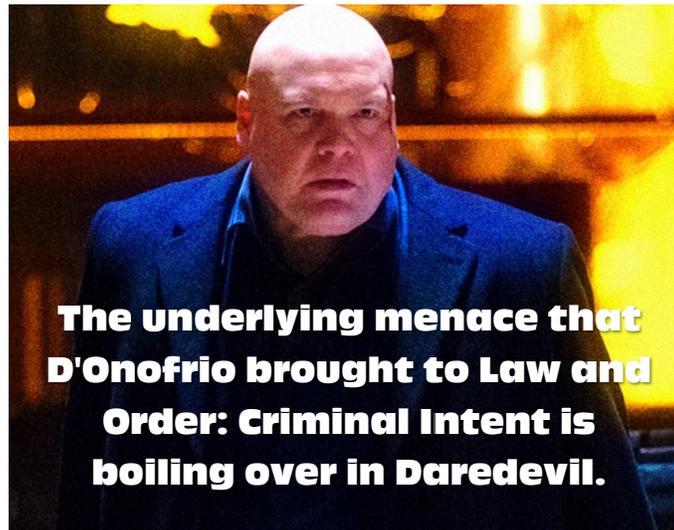
Charlie Cox portrays Matt Murdoch and Daredevil convincingly, but it seems that he doesn't quite take as many emotional risks with the role as D'Onofrio does with Fisk. Overall though, it's a strong characterization and you can feel his aches and broken bones even as he just lays on a couch. You also feel his pain because he wants the law to work but still must put on the mask and get his hands dirty.

The other actors and actresses also excel at creating a fully three dimensional world that is worth investing your time. Two in particular stand out: Rosario Dawson brings weight to nurse Claire Temple, who is conflicted about

helping Murdoch heal from his fighting injuries, only so he can go out to injure more people - and himself. Adriane Lenox rises above what could easily have been a cliché as Alzheimer's Disease patient Doris Urich to give her husband, Ben (Vondie Curtis-Hall), the courage to do the right thing as a reporter.

The only complaint that can be lodged against the show is that in some cases the dialog is forced and trite. But this not a show-killer.

Daredevil is a Netflix Original Series. While definitely binge-worthy, its intensity makes it best to take it in two or three sittings. -RP **A**



## **LAST MAN ON EARTH** (Fox series)

What would your checklist be if you were The Last Man On Earth?

- Water
- Food
- Shelter
- Sex

That final item might be problematic.

The title pretty well sums up the premise. A year after a virus, Phil Miller (Will Forte) is The Last Man On Earth. Or so he thinks. As it moves through its first season on Fox more people do show up, both women and men.

You could say this is about relationships, the blush of romance, the mystery of love. But mostly it's about sex. Who's getting some and with whom. The sexual dynamics and sexual politics shift as each new person is added to the small group.

This is a somewhat daring show. Phil isn't a particularly endearing character. He's a bit of a lazy schlub, somewhat boorish, and has few usable skills. Even when he's the only male, he's not an Alpha Male. He's the guy in the bar that will say almost anything to get in a woman's pants. The last woman on Earth, or at least for the first episodes, Carol Pilbasian (Kristen Schaal) is only marginally better. She's the woman Mickey Gilley sings about when "The Girls Get Prettier At Closin' Time."

Otherwise, within the group all the eccentricities that we love at first in a person,

then hate, are on display rather quickly.

Can seven people live together without driving each other crazy? Wait...that's *The Odd Couple*. It's extremely likely these people would not be together if they had a choice. In fact, they still choose to live in separate homes.

The laughs are generally easy, although often sophomoric. Not unlike the court jester who says the things that must be said, even if no one wants

to hear them. *The Last Man On Earth* is an uncomfortable show.

The task, as Carol put it, is to repopulate the Earth. If only they can get along. So, yeah. It's about relationships.

But mostly it's about getting laid. -RP **B**



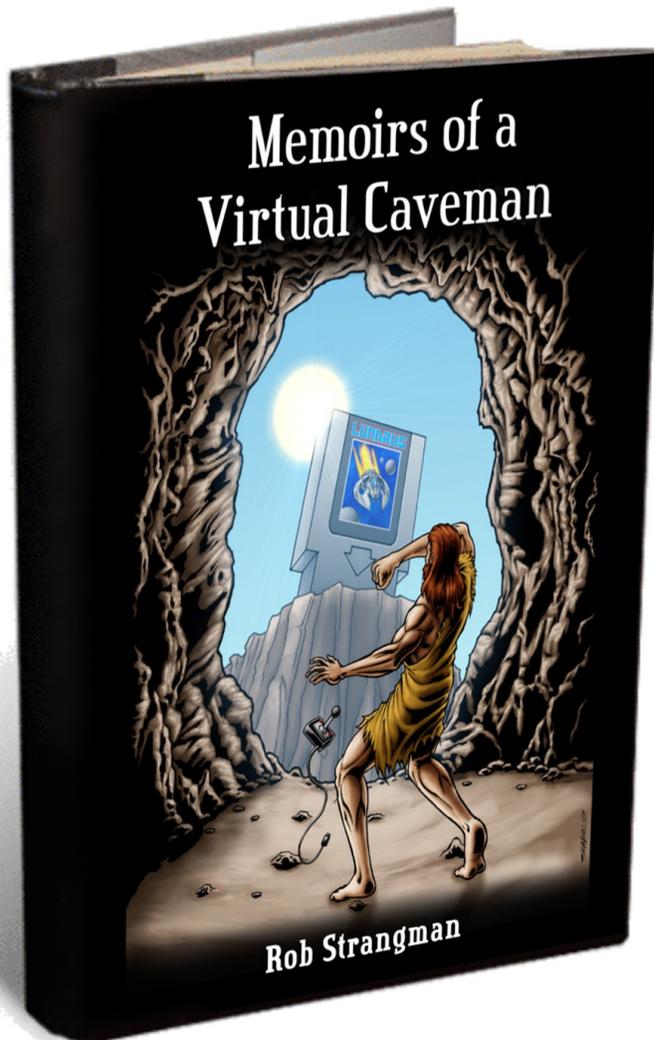
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It was the era of Star Wars, Indiana Jones, G.I. Joe, and Transformers – not to mention all the toys, books, and trading cards that went with them. And of course...

**There were video games.**



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- Julius, via Facebook

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## TOYBOX

# ALL ABOARD THE ALPHA PROBE

by Rob O'Hara

In the early days of home computing my father once explained to me that there were two kinds of modems: Hayes, and "Hayes compatible." Similarly there are two kinds of building blocks for children: LEGO, and those that are "compatible with the leading brand of building blocks." Even though Kenner didn't invent the 3¾" scale for action figures (that's credited to Takara Toys), their line of *Star Wars* action figures quickly set that size as the action figure standard, a scale that was used by everything from G.I. Joe to the Dukes of Hazzard and the A-Team. In fact, that same scale is still being used for action figures today by companies like Bif Bang Pow and ReAction.

In 1975, three years before Kenner cranked out their first *Star Wars* figures, Fisher-Price launched their line of Adventure People toys. The first Adventure People playsets included a rescue truck, a safari adventure Jeep (complete with animals), an air-sea rescue helicopter, and a daredevil sports plane. Each of these sets came with 3¾" scale action figures with poseable arms and legs, and slightly more head mobility than the average *Star Wars* figure would contain. Additional sets followed each year, sets that included vehicles such as boats and dune buggies and vans and race cars and motorcycles and even a kayak.

By the late 1970s, however, children's eyes were drifting upward, away from lakes and



mountains and up toward the stars. Based on the astronomical (no pun intended) success of *Star Wars*, a new wave of space toys began invading toy stores. Nature-themed playsets were quickly shoved aside by Battlestar Galactica, Buck Rogers, and *Black Hole* action figures and ships, all of them sticking to that same 3¾" scale to ensure Buck Rogers could, in a pinch, escape danger by hot-wiring an X-Wing Fighter if necessary.





In 1980, the same year *The Empire Strikes Back* hit movie theaters, Fisher-Price joined the crowd and launched their own space-themed sets. Sometimes referred to as the "Alpha Series," the first of these playsets was Fisher-Price playset #325 – the Alpha Probe, modeled after the Space Shuttle.

Static, non-movable toys were out of vogue. Kids wanted toys that were configurable and "did stuff," and in that regard the Alpha Probe delivered. The Alpha Probe itself included a pilot seat that slide backwards and forwards to gain entrance, and large pod bay doors that opened to reveal an escape pod hidden inside. On the Alpha Probe's rear wing were three buttons that activated electronic sounds and lights, powered by a single 9-volt battery. Two of the buttons played sounds of rockets

launching and computers chattering, while the third played an alarm sound that also activated flashing red lights on the rear of the probe. The bottom of the shuttle contained three small wheels to accommodate ground-based takeoffs and landings.

The included escape pod (identified as "Alpha Recon" on the outside of the box) could be stored either inside the shuttle's bay or on top of it, thanks to molded plastic rails on top of the bay doors. Alpha Recon contained a single hinge and opened not unlike a Tyrannosaurus Rex's mouth, allowing a single figure to be placed inside. The large rockets on the rear of the Alpha Probe could also be removed and reattached to the rear of Alpha Recon. This is akin to removing a Corvette's engine and installing it on your lawnmower; a modification



that would ensure you would never be late to any engagement in space, ever.

The Fisher-Price Alpha Probe playset contained two Astro Pilots, referred to by collectors as "male astronaut" and "female astronaut." While the male astronaut only came in one style (brown hair and groovy brown sideburns), the female astronaut apparently came in both blonde and brunette varieties. Their blue-translucent and non-removable helmets fairly limited articulation of the astronaut's heads, but their arms and legs (complete with golden gloves and boots) were still poseable. On the shoulder of each figure was an atomic logo, which also appeared on Alpha Recon's hood and Alpha Probe's wings.



The final accessory included was the life-support tether. This molded and non-pliable piece of plastic was shaped roughly like a question mark and included three pegs on each end. Alpha Probe, Alpha Recon, and both astronauts contained holes in which the tether could be inserted. The resulting illusion was that the astronauts (or Alpha Recon) were floating in outer space and connected to the Alpha Probe via the tether. While I always wished that the tether would have been made poseable, the multiple pegs and holes allowed for a lot of creativity when it came to attaching things to other things.



While many vintage *Star Wars* vehicles were somewhat fragile and didn't survive years of rough play, the Alpha Probe itself is pretty solid. With few actual moving parts on the shuttle itself, there were few things to break off. When I do run across these in the wild, most commonly

I find either the Alpha Recon shuttle or, more commonly, the rear rocket jets are missing. The tail wing of Alpha Recon is made of rubber rather than hard plastic, a decision that assuredly kept it from breaking off; unfortunately, the different material tends to "yellow" at a different rate than the rest of the ship, for Alpha Probes that spent too much time orbiting the sun.

Successful sales of the Alpha Probe led to more sets in the Alpha line, including the Alpha Star (a moon buggy with a trailer), the Alpha Interceptor (a smaller space ship with a rotating cockpit), and Firestar 1 (a small one-man speeder). Somewhat confusingly, Fisher-Price released an orange moon buggy *also* named Alpha Recon, the same name as the escape pod included with the Alpha Probe playset. (Apparently they loved the name so much they decided to reuse it.) All of these sets came with unique astronauts and aliens. In addition to those figures, several other space-themed

figures (including Opticon, Brainoid, Clawtron, X-Ray Man and his wife X-Ray Woman) were sold only as carded action figures. Because they were not included in any of the playsets, those additional figures are much harder to find today.

I've always appreciated the fact that Fisher-Price's Adventure People toys were size-compatible with Kenner's *Star Wars* line. Many times, while the Alpha Pilots were off exploring strange new worlds on foot, Han and Chewie would take the Alpha Probe out for a spin behind their back, and it was not uncommon for Hammerhead and Walrus Man to share intergalactic stories with Clawtron and X-Ray Man at the local cantina. I got my Alpha Probe for a birthday present when I was eight years old (probably from someone who rightfully assumed I already owned every *Star Wars*-related spaceship), and it has remained a part of my collection ever since.



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# THE VIEW IS WORTH THE CLIMB

**Most of us grew up with nine planets – and thanks to New Horizons and an intrepid fleet of other robot explorers, those nine worlds are now real places instead of tiny points of distant light.**

by Earl Green

For those of us of A Certain Age, July 2015 marked a turning point in the exploration of the Earth's solar system. On July 14<sup>th</sup>, operating independently according to a set of pre-programmed instructions from Earth (which was so far away that a signal would take over four hours), NASA's New Horizons unmanned spacecraft, built and operated by John Hopkins University's Applied Physics Lab, made its closest approach to Pluto. By now, after years of confusion and no small amount of debate, we didn't know if New Horizons was visiting the ninth *planet* or not, but either way, it was the end of an era. Every planet – or, if you're picky, every body *considered* a planet prior to 2006 – had been visited, photographed, and remotely sensed by a human-built spacecraft. Far from completing the exploration of the solar system, this one-and-done flyby of tiny Pluto did fulfill, after five decades, the promise of the Grand Tour.

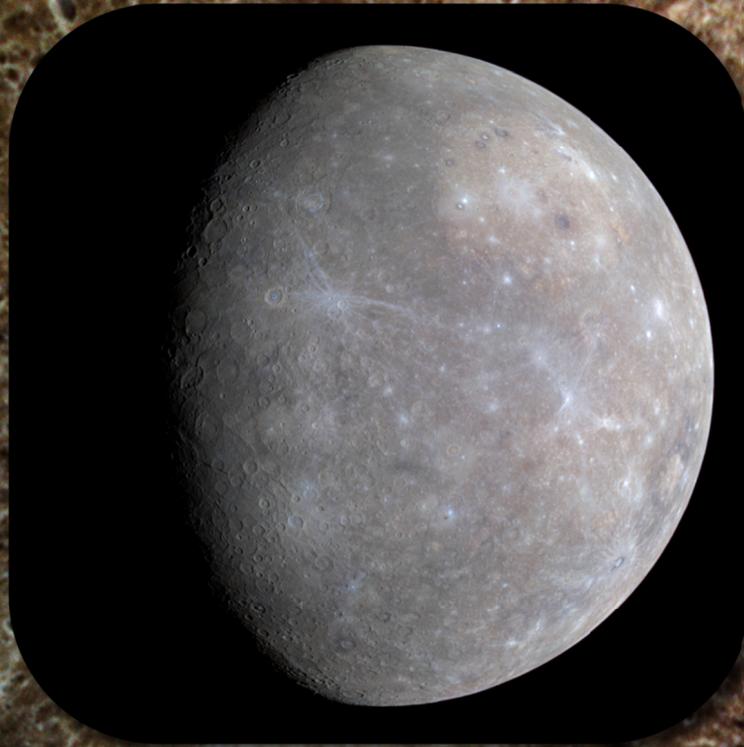
The Grand Tour was the name given by NASA and Jet Propulsion Laboratory to a program built on the then-recent theory of gravitational assist trajectories (or, as referred to then, "gravity propulsion"). A recent JPL hire, Michael Minovitch, borrowed computer time at Caltech in 1961 to tackle the three-body

mathematical problem, considered unsolved at the time. Tackled at various points through history by such great minds as Isaac Newton, Galileo Galilei, Jean d'Alembert and Joseph Louis Lagrange, the three-body problem was a formidable one in space travel terms. Minovitch not only provided a proof for the three-body problem, accounting for the positions of three moving celestial bodies, but also calculated the transfers of momentum between these bodies and passing spacecraft at certain distances. Where a generation of engineers had assumed the outer planets were out of reach due to the limitations of chemical propulsion, Minovitch put them within reach with the creation of the gravity assist maneuver, which can either put you on a free-return trajectory back to Earth from the moon, or slingshot you from one world to the next. The outermost planets – Uranus, Neptune, even tiny Pluto – were theoretically reachable.

In just a little over half a century, these places have gone from points of light in the sky to real worlds – some of which we've revisited with more advanced spacecraft, and some of which we've just realized are worth further exploration.

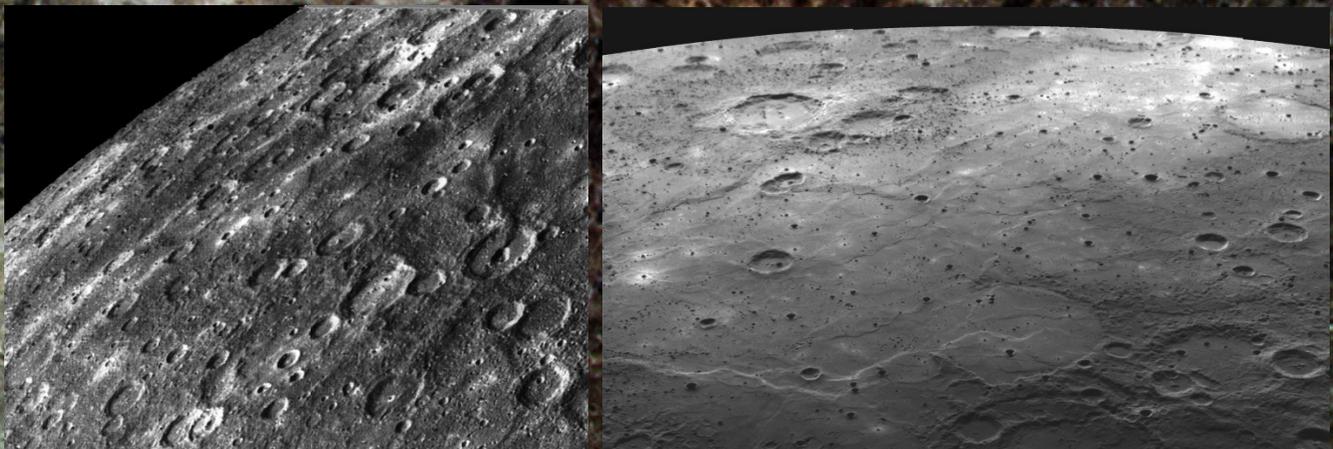
It's the story of how far we've come, only to realize we have much further yet to go.

# MERCURY



The solar system's innermost planet presents a formidable challenge to robot explorers: the planet's dayside is oven-hot, and its nightside cosmically cold. A lander on Mercury will have to wait for technology that can survive those environmental extremes.

The planet was first explored by NASA's Mariner 10 between 1973 and 1974, with the spacecraft mapping 45% of Mercury's heavily cratered, metal-rich surface. Another NASA spacecraft, MESSENGER, made several flybys of Mercury beginning in 2008, finally settling into a permanent orbit in 2011 and mapping the planet's entire surface. With its fuel supply exhausted, MESSENGER crashed into the surface of Mercury in early 2014. A joint European/Japanese mission, BepiColombo, will launch two orbiters toward Mercury in 2017, to arrive in 2024.



At left: Mercury's Wren Crater and Antoniadi Darsum from Mariner 10, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1974; at right: a relatively smooth area of Mercury's surface containing what may be volcanic features, imaged in HD by MESSENGER between October 2008 and January 2009.

Above and background: Mercury in full color from MESSENGER.

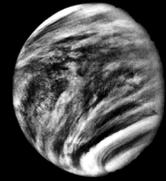
# VENUS

Once fancifully thought to be a jungle world teeming with life, Venus' true nature was revealed by scientific investigation to be completely inhospitable to life as it is known on Earth. With crushing atmospheric pressure at the surface level (hundreds of times that of Earth's sea level), and temperatures soaring into the hundreds of degrees, Venus is one of the least friendly places in the solar system. Even robust surface landers launched by the Soviet space program in its prime could barely last an hour on average before their systems succumbed to the harsh Venusian environment. Since the 1970s, the emphasis has shifted toward mapping Venus' surface by radar.

Some of the features revealed by years of radar mapping and investigation by the Pioneer Venus, Magellan, and Venus Express missions, as well as radar mapping conducted by the later Soviet Venera missions, include mountainous regions with large flow structures – most likely signs of active volcanism that could be the culprit behind the planet's runaway greenhouse effect and toxic atmosphere (which includes an acidic haze). Most images of the planet which show cloud structure are taken through violet or ultraviolet filters; to a camera or telescope imaging Venus in natural light, the planet appears almost featureless and white.

Upon the discovery of Venus' harsh environment, most images of the planet came from spacecraft simply using Venus for a gravity assist to a different destination, or from radar mapping orbiters. Only recently has Venus been the subject of renewed interest; the joint European/Japanese BepiColombo mission will fly by Venus en route to Mercury, while the already-launched Japanese space probe Akatsuki, also known as the Venus Climate Orbiter, will fire its engines in its second attempt to enter a useful orbit around Venus for scientific observations. (A previous engine burn in 2010 left Akatsuki in an orbit around the sun, which will carry it close to Venus again in late 2015.)

With its dense atmosphere trapping most of the heat that Venus receives from the sun, the solar system's second planet serves another important purpose for us on Earth: it's a warning about what lies ahead if Earth's environment isn't kept in balance. Massive volcanoes may have caused Venus' greenhouse effect, but Earth still has a chance...and a choice.



1973: Mariner 10



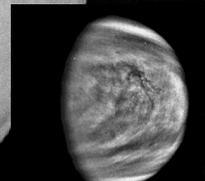
1975: Venera 9 and 10



1978: Pioneer Venus 1 and 2



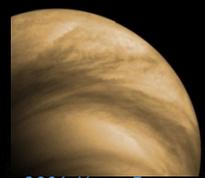
1981: Venera 13 and 14



1990: Galileo



1990: Magellan



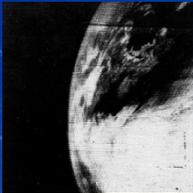
2006: Venus Express

Background: Venus as seen by MESSENGER, 2007

# EARTH



1947: filmed from a captured V2 rocket launched from White Sands, NM



1960: TIROS-1



1966: Lunar Orbiter 1



1967: DODGE-1 (first color photo from geosynchronous orbit)



1968: Apollo 8



1972: Apollo 17

Just because the human race lives on Earth doesn't mean that it's easy to observe. Few of the nearly 2,000 man-made satellites orbiting Earth actually observe it visually; many of



them are communications or GPS satellites which require no cameras. Even satellites in geosynchronous orbit are generally weather satellites tasked with

watching only a small slice of the globe. It took lunar and interplanetary missions to give us a look at Earth as a space probe from another world might see it. Many outgoing probes to other planets take their first photos of Earth and the moon (a tradition begun in 1973 by Mariner 10), if only to calibrate their cameras. Real-time views of Earth from space are, even in 2015, a relatively new thing: the High-Definition Earth Viewing Experiment, mounted on the exterior of the International Space Station, beams home HD views of Earth, while the recently launched DSCOVR satellite observes Earth's entire sunlit side from the L1 Lagrange point - with the moon sometimes passing between DSCOVR and Earth (see below). Top: Earth from MESSENGER in 2010; center: Earth and lunar far side from Chinese space probe Chang'e 5-T1



1977: Voyager 1 (distance from Earth: 11,000,000km)



1990: Voyager 1 (distance from Earth: 6,000,000,000km)



2003: Mars Global Surveyor (photo taken from Mars orbit)



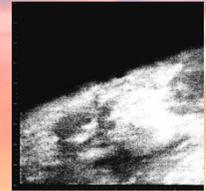
2015: DSCOVR (Deep Space Climate Observatory)

Background image: Earth from the International Space Station, photo by ESA astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti

# MARS

Ever since the first manned lunar landing in 1969, Mars has been considered the obvious next checkpoint for in-depth exploration in the solar system, whether by robot, astronaut or cosmonaut. If there's any doubt of that, consider that the second and third robotic explorers to fly past Mars did so within a month of Armstrong and Aldrin setting foot on the moon; their more advanced descendant, Mariner 9, was conducting a mapping mission of the entire red planet as the final moon landing was taking place. A long-delayed pair of robot landers – scaled back from heavier 1960s designs that assumed a much thicker, Earthlike atmosphere could break their parachuted fall from orbit – touched down in 1976.

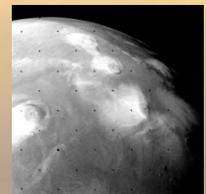
But then the American space program took up its own Earth-centric orbit, focusing almost entirely on the Space Shuttle and space vehicles that could be launched from it. Exploration of Mars languished as astronauts tested new technologies for staying alive in orbit of Earth, including the eventual construction of a long-term space station. Missions to Mars resumed in the 1990s, with rovers growing in size and complexity, and a fleet of orbiting satellites settling into permanent orbits to relay those rovers' signals back to Earth. As new and yet-to-be-launched rovers and landers search Mars for signs of all-important water, tests of new technologies aboard the International Space Station and the early steps of new boosters and the new Orion multi-purpose crew vehicle all have one goal in mind: the fourth planet from the sun, and almost certainly the next world in the solar system that will be inhabited, even temporarily, by humans.



1965: Mariner 5



1969: Mariner 6 and 7



1971: Mariner 9



1976: Viking 1 and 2



1997: Mars Pathfinder with Sojourner Rover



1997: Mars Global Surveyor

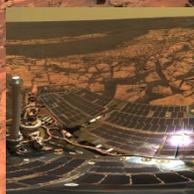


2003: Mars Express (ESA)

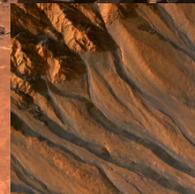
2012: Mars Science Laboratory Rover, a.k.a. Curiosity



2001: Mars Odyssey



2004: Mars Exploration Rovers Spirit and Opportunity



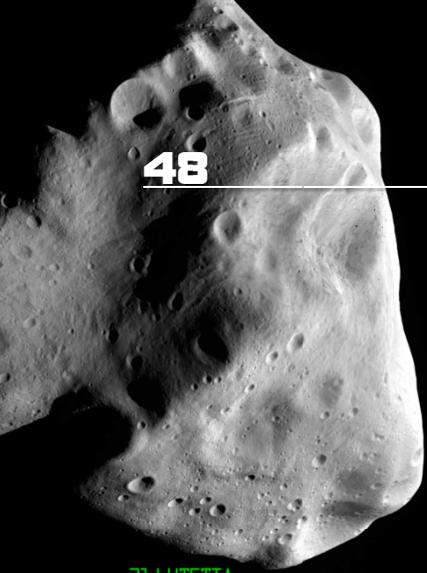
2006: Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter



2008: Phoenix Lander

Top of page: montage of limb of Mars with Phobos via India's Mangalyaan Mars Orbiter Mission, with view of Deimos as seen from Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter

# ASTERIODS & COMETS



21 LUTETIA  
via Rosetta in 2010

951 GASpra  
via Galileo in 1991



243 IDA  
via Galileo in 1993



NOT SHOWN  
162173 1999 JU3  
to be visited by Hayabusa-2 in 2018



253 MATHILDE  
via NEAR Shoemaker in 1997



4179 TOUTATIS  
via Chang'e 2 in 2012



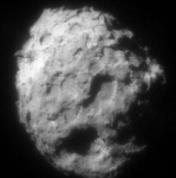
25143 ITOKAWA  
via Hayabusa in 2005



1 CERES  
via Dawn in 2015



4 VESTA  
via Dawn in 2011



Comet 81/P WILD 2  
via Stardust in 2004

Comet 19/P BORRELLY  
via Deep Space 1 in 2001



Comet 1/P HALLEY  
via Giotto in 1986



Comet 103/P HARTLEY 2  
via Deep Impact/EPHXI  
in 2010



Comet 67/P CHURYUMOV-GERASIMENKO  
via Rosetta in 2015



Comet 9/P TEMPEL 1  
via Deep Impact in 2005



# JUPITER

The mightiest of planets offers a punishing test for any space vehicles and explorers who would dare to venture near it – and a tantalizing prize that may offer some of the solar system’s most hospitable environments to life beyond Earth.

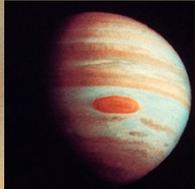
Those environments aren’t found on Jupiter itself. A giant ball of roiling gases, Jupiter has no detectable surface, but it does have intense belts of radiation – enough to pose a serious hazard to mere hardened electronics from Earth. Any spacecraft that has ventured perilously close to Jupiter has suffered faults and failures among its electronic components (namely its central processing unit) in what the mission planners refer to as a flying Faraday cage. A recently announced change to Juno’s mission plan, designed to gather as much of the desired scientific data as early as possible in the mission, would seem to indicate that there’s some concern about how long Juno will last in that tough neighborhood.

But one of the most promising prospects for a place to find life beyond Earth can also, paradoxically, be found in that same radiation-bathed environment. The smallest of the large “Galilean” moons of Jupiter, Europa, has a crust of water ice, and analysis of findings from the Galileo mission reveals a high likelihood that there’s a liquid saltwater ocean beneath that ice, kept warm by the constant tidal forces exerted upon Europa by both Jupiter and Europa’s volatile neighboring moon, Io.

Though Juno will monitor and study Jupiter’s thick atmosphere, the focus of future missions to Jupiter’s part of the solar system will be Europa. NASA has begun planning its own Europa mission, while ESA’s JUICE (JUPITER ICy moon Explorer) mission will launch as early as 2022.



1973: Pioneer 10



1974: Pioneer 11



1979: Voyager 1



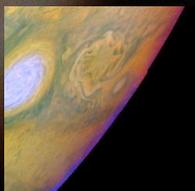
1979: Voyager 1



1979: Voyager 2



1994: Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 impacts via Hubble Space Telescope



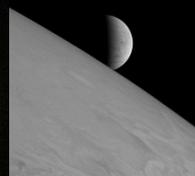
1995: Galileo



2000: Cassini



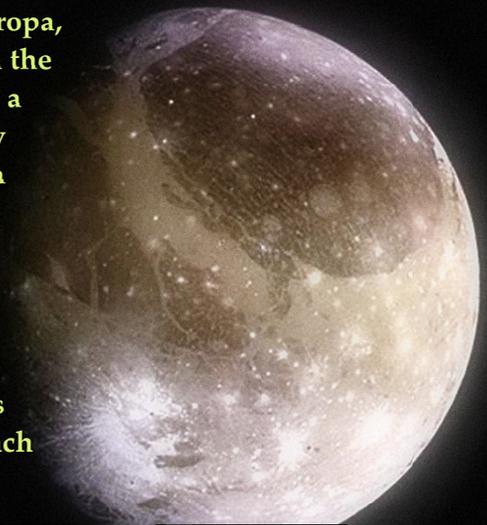
2007: New Horizons



2007: New Horizons



Coming in 2016: Juno



# SATURN



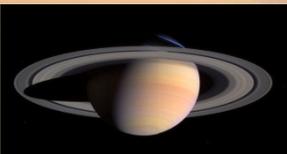
Montage of Saturn and Titan  
as seen by Pioneer 11 in 1979



Saturn from Voyager 1 in 1980



Titan from Voyager 1 in 1980



Saturn from Cassini in 2004



Huygens probe lands on Titan  
January 14, 2005

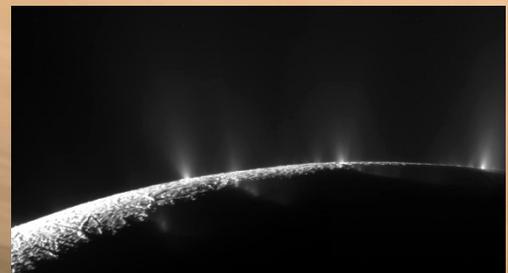
First visited by Pioneer 11 in 1979, Saturn proved that it doesn't make things easy for space travelers, robotic or otherwise. It's no easy feat to get there, and once there, it doesn't reveal all of its secrets. Neither Pioneer 11 nor Voyager 1 were able to see through the clouds of Saturn's moon Titan, which was known to have a thick atmosphere that might be keeping its surface warm enough to harbor the building blocks of life (in theory). Voyager 1's attempt to peer through the clouds brought it close enough to Titan to alter its trajectory, a calculated gamble that revealed nothing of Titan's surface and cost Voyager an opportunity to be the first spacecraft to glimpse Pluto.

One of the last vestiges of NASA's scaled-back Grand Tour of the outer solar system, Cassini, left Earth in the late 1990s and arrived at Saturn in 2005, delivering the European-built Huygens space probe to punch through Titan's clouds and land on the surface. Cassini remains on station at Saturn, sending *gigabytes* of photos and scientific data year after year, though its dwindling fuel supply makes it necessary to plan for Cassini's final mission: a plunge directly into Saturn in 2017, meant to prevent the spacecraft from crashing into and contaminating any of Saturn's moons.

The likeliest candidate for life among the satellites of Saturn is no longer Titan, coincidentally: much like Jupiter's moon Europa, Enceladus - whose surface geysers jet relatively warm water-ice slush into space, betraying the presence of an ocean beneath its icy surface - has become the subject of much speculation, and Cassini mission planners are also calling for a future mission to concentrate on that moon, possibly landing on and drilling through its surface to see if anything calls the waters of Enceladus home.



Saturn eclipsing the sun, as seen by Cassini in 2006



The geysers of Enceladus, 2009

# URANUS

Visited only once, by short end of the stick most fascinating places. faces the sun while the its orbit on its equator, away from the planet Uranus likewise orbit the planet, with having been torn

Voyager 2 found discovered the but it arrived at a time seen in the atmosphere, dynamic photo op. Worse visit to Uranus happened the destruction of space out of the news. Hubble since shown massive storms the kind of dynamic weather features beckons for a rematch, but with the once- the outer planets now nearly 40 years in the to make at least part of the journey going

Voyager 2 in 1986, Uranus has gotten the when it's one of the solar system's Tipped over on its side so that one pole other remains in shadow, rotating through Uranus has a magnetic field that twists in a crazy corkscrew pattern. The moons of on their sides, forming a bull's-eye around one of those moons, Miranda, showing signs of apart and pulled back together again.

several new moons in 1986 and unpredictable magnetic field, when no storms could be resulting in a less-than- yet, Voyager's mere days before shuttle *Challenger* squeezed it Space Telescope photos have taking place on Uranus, precisely that weren't visible in 1986. Uranus in-176-years Grand Tour convergence of past, any new visitors to Uranus will have much slower than Voyager 2 did.

Clockwise from top center: Ariel, Umbriel, Oberon, Titania, and Miranda, with Uranus in the middle; montage of images from Voyager 2 in 1986



# NEPTUNE

Voyager 2's last planetary stop was rife with uncertainty; the aging spacecraft wasn't quite up to specs anymore, having long since traded in a very agile (but increasingly unreliable) scan platform for fuel-hungry motion-compensation maneuvers to keep the mere action of starting and stopping its onboard data tape recorder from imparting picture-smearing drifting motion. Voyager 2 had one shot at this photo opportunity. No one knew if or when Neptune would be in our viewfinder again.

NASA's own budgeting was also just now emerging from over a decade of a "use-the-shuttle-to-launch-everything" mentality that had constrained the size and capabilities of such interplanetary craft as Galileo and Magellan. *Challenger* changed all that; since many outer planet probes are too far from the sun to use solar panels, they rely on plutonium power sources – something that probably wasn't a good thing to put on the cargo manifest of the fallible space shuttle.

Against these odds, Voyager 2 found 900-mile-an-hour winds on Neptune, blowing giant storms across its atmosphere, while Neptune's enormous, gravitationally-captured moon Triton - almost certainly formed in the distant Kuiper Belt - showed signs of cryovolcanism, dark geysers of organic-rich dark material erupting from beneath its cantaloupe-textured icy surface.

It was a tantalizingly brief glimpse of a planet and moon worthy of far more study, though modern NASA budget restraints have already nixed one Neptune follow-up orbiter mission, called Argo.

Like Uranus, Neptune beckons from the edge of the solar system, an entire deep azure-blue world of unfinished business.



# PLUTO



1930: Pluto discovered



1978: Charon discovered



2006: via Hubble



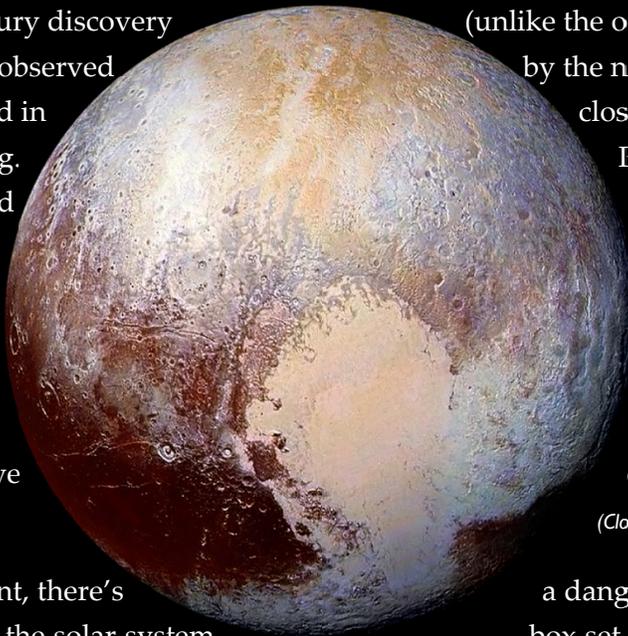
2010: via Hubble



2015: one week before New Horizons' closest approach

The set of pictures above is reason enough to justify this entire feature.

A 20<sup>th</sup> century discovery have been observed Pluto is tied in and sensing, with the aid like basic alternate as that view of to decide map that we recently.



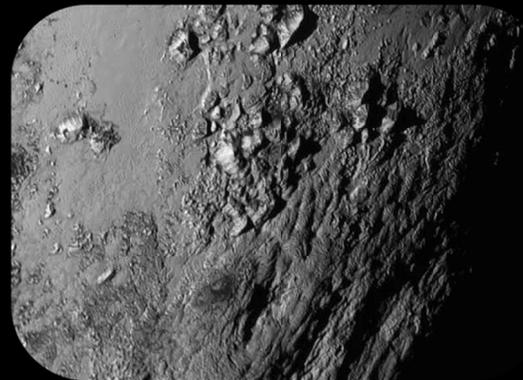
(unlike the other planets, some of which by the naked eye since ancient times), the story of closely with the story of remote imaging Pluto was the first world discovered of technology – even 1930 technology astrophotography and a device to rapidly between two photographs – and technology has progressed, so has our Pluto, until it's a real place, real enough what placenames should be applied to a couldn't even dream of drawing up until

(Clockwise from upper left: Nix, Charon, Hydra, Pluto, from New Horizons)

At this point, there's stop – that the solar system The photos gathered at Pluto from New Horizons will still be trickling back to Earth for months, while the mission planners decide which obscure Kuiper Belt object will be visited next (a target which will probably take upward of five years to reach). The ability to directly image exoplanets – worlds orbiting other stars – is not far off, though those tantalizing first images will show us tiny pinpricks of light at mind-boggling distances.

a danger in assuming we've seen it all, and we can box set is complete. But we're only getting started.

That's when it's important to remember that Pluto was once a tiny pinprick of light, too far away to even imagine visiting, a mere 85 years before we visited it and took some of the highest-resolution images ever taken of a body in the solar system. All we had to do was decide to go and have a look.



We have to go back.

Comet 67P/  
Churyumov-Gerasimenko  
from Rosetta, orbiting  
30 kilometers away, 2015

Name any mission that has ever visited and then either left or shut down at another world, and the rallying cry among the scientists behind that original mission is uniform: *we have to go back.*

There's more to see and more to learn. Robotic space probes have never just carried cameras; in fact, the very first such probe to successfully reach its target, Mariner 2, visited Venus in 1962 without a planet-facing camera aboard. JPL's Ranger probes to the moon were a hotbed of debate between scientists and other divisions at NASA: the scientists wanted scientific readings from the vicinity of the moon, and cared nothing for pictures. But NASA also knew it had to have something other than hard numbers to show to keep public support: it needed pictures, proof that it had gotten there.

We've since landed robotic spacecraft on the moon, comets, asteroids, Mars, Venus, a moon of Saturn... and those spacecraft routinely have entire imaging teams who can calculate when a known feature will stray into the path of their vehicle's camera eye. Calculating what a spacecraft will be able to "see" while on a given trajectory is fairly easy; very few images from the likes of Voyager, Cassini, or New Horizons turned out to be mis-aimed, smeared failures.

We know *where* these things are, which is amazing in and of itself. But to find out what they actually look like, we have to go there. And then to study what we find there on the all-too-brief flyby, we have to go back.

Because we want to understand what physical processes could possibly be producing the things we see there. Because we want to understand how those same processes shape our world (or, conversely, don't apply to our world at all). Because we want to find telltale hints of how the solar system formed, and how it gave rise to the life that now studies it from within - us. And sometimes, just because we can, and just because it's beautiful out there.

That's why we have to go back, and why we do go back, time and again. That's also why we shouldn't stop going.

IT CAME FROM THE INTERWEBS

# FUTURE COPS, OLD FLAMES



by Earl Green

## KUNG FURY

(writer/director: David Sanderson)  
See it on YouTube

Kickstarted well beyond its funding threshold in 2013, *Kung Fury* was either going to satisfy everyone wowed by its hilarious trailer, or it was going to disappoint everyone – or maybe a little bit of both. I was both underwhelmed and impressed at the same time. Could the trailer's Swedish cast and crew actually deliver a feature-length dose of the ripped-from-crappy-'80s-action-movies mash-up promised by the trailer?

The answer is: no. Perhaps wisely, they didn't even try. *Kung Fury* clocks in at a little over half an hour, probably well short of what many were expecting, but on an artistic and comedic level, one has to respect the decision to not stretch the joke beyond its snapping point. At half an hour, the concept – and the gags – sustain well. There's one scene, involving two Nazi soldiers

comparing moustaches, which drags things to a screeching halt – but even then I was snickering through the whole thing. By not trying to keep the joke on the shelf past its sell-by date, *Kung Fury* becomes something I wasn't expecting: in addition to masterfully parodying late '80s/early '90s bottom-shelf action flicks, it also parodies the typical '90s syndication action hour pilot. This isn't a movie – it's a pilot for a *series*.



He's a dinosaur. He's a cop. He has a British accent.  
You have to be okay with that to play in *Kung Fury*'s world.

The gag that's so dangerous to stretch out is *Kung Fury*'s celebration of the utterly brain-cell-free spree of (often direct-to-cable or direct-to-video) late '80s/early '90s action flicks. Seemingly vocabulary-stunted martial-arts-master hero with a haunted past? Check. Hot cars? Check. Hero has a penthouse bachelor pad that no police officer could possibly afford? Check. Arcade games that transform into killer robots? Check. A policeman who happens to be a biped dinosaur? Check. (Wait, *what?*) Going back in time to kill Hitler to prevent him from coming forward in time and committing mass murder, thus inspiring our hero to go back in time to kill Hitler? Check. (You taking notes here?) End credit music sung by David Hasselhoff? Check. Senseless violence? Waiter, check please! This is more *Kung Fury* than anyone could sustain for an hour and change. The plot is improbable, the acting deliberately lamentable, and the production values actually impressive on a certain level when one realizes

that nearly the entire thing was shot against green screen in Sweden.

To gloss over some of the logical flaws in an early action scene, the movie develops "tracking flaws" a la a 1980s VCR dutifully trying to play an overplayed, damaged videotape. Gags like this can be seen as a cheat, or as part of the humor. (Given that the "tracking" effectively fast-forwards through the highlights of an over-the-top fight scene, I'm okay with it. It's part of the joke.)

A little bit less welcome is the chromatic aberration effect drenching the entire movie. While it does evoke the look of a lowest-bidder videotape duplication job (and perhaps more importantly, helps to draw attention gently away from some of the rough edges of the effects work), it's distracting and a bit hard on the eyes – it's like the movie is perpetually slightly out of focus.



David Sanderson, also the writer and director of *Kung Fury*, stars as a cop from the future (1985) with laser raptor problems in the Viking age. Yes, you did just read that correctly.



But these are technical gripes, and there's so much to love about this movie: vaguely effeminate Hitler ("what ze f#\$%?") and his robotic eagle mascot; the aforementioned eagle robot having an incredibly ineffectual fight with a T-rex whose arms can't reach it; the whole thing grinding to a halt for a cell phone product placement; Thor (yes, as in the god of thunder)

entreating his allies to admire his peccs; weirdly framed close-ups and improbable martial arts stunts that no human could possibly pull off without the aid of CGI; a police officer who inexplicably happens to be a dinosaur with a British accent (which no one finds the least bit extraordinary)...the list is endless. This is every bad movie ever to land in the 1980s, filtered through the mindset of *Police Squad* and *The Naked Gun*, played for deadly earnest to heighten the laugh factor.

*Kung Fury* is everything its trailer promised it would be, and it doesn't commit the fatal error of outstaying its welcome. Which, of course, demands the answer to the following question: when do we get *Kung Fury 2*? And where are the official action figures? **A-**



In only its second episode (*Lolani*), *Star Trek Continues* took a strong feminist stance. With *The White Iris*, this is taken a bit further, this time explaining, attempting to justify, and possibly attempting to apologize for Captain Kirk's legendary libido. Where one falls on the

ongoing debate on the issue of feminism will probably determine where one lands with regard to *The White Iris*. The episode also deals with the fact that an awful lot of the women Kirk has fallen for have ended up dead by the time their respective episodes' end credits rolled. Trying to

sensitively handle a subject that has become something of a running joke among Star Trek fans is quite a tightrope walk.

So the question is: should we expect Kirk to feel grief and guilt over these fatal specimens of his legendary love-'em-and-leave-'em attitudes? Or should we just ruefully chuckle to ourselves about Star Trek having been created and produced in an era when values and thinking on these things were vastly different than they are now? *The White Iris* deepens Kirk as a character, but removing his frat-boy attitudes toward relationships is a significant course change. (Though one does notice that these liaisons become virtually nonexistent in the movie era, so a transition has to have happened at some point.) Whether or not taking James T. Kirk in this direction is necessary will be the source of ongoing debate here. As usual, Vic Mignogna does an excellent job as Kirk, at times appearing strikingly like William Shatner. Star Trek Continues' production values continue to be top-notch.

The series' guest stars also continue to be top notch, reeling in Xena's Adrienne Wilkinson and 1980s Doctor Who star Colin Baker for fairly significant guest roles. Baker's bluster and exasperation are among his acting superpowers, and they're put to excellent use here with no cutesy nods to his position in the science fiction pantheon.

But there are nods aplenty to past Star Trek. It's

safe to say that a pretty good knowledge of classic Star Trek is required to really sink one's teeth into *The White Iris*. Star Trek Continues has a top-notch cast and an expanding selection of near-perfect reproductions of the classic Star Trek sets. Why continue to spend these resources on sequelizing the original show? Previous episodes have heavily referenced *Who Mourns For Adonais?*



The (former) Doctor is in...utter shock when Kirk beats a hasty retreat

and *Mirror, Mirror*; the first short-form vignette produced tacked a new ending onto *Turnabout Intruder*. With its incredible resources and high profile, Star Trek Continues could be doing what any new studio-produced Star Trek needs to do: tell new stories, and lure in a new generation of fans (and, it must be said, Kickstarter donors). Instead, it's committing the frequent fan film sin of playing "inside baseball". When your whole mission statement is to make new Star Trek... don't spend too much time dwelling on what's come before. Star Trek Continues is far from the only fan film project guilty of this, but it'd be nice to see some new trails being blazed. **B**

OF THE TRIFFIDS - BLAKE'S 7 - HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY - THE TRIPODS - NEVERWHERE - TH

FROM THE AUTHOR OF VWORP!1 AND VWORP!2

## A GUIDE TO 42 BRITISH SCI-FI TV CLASSICS

From the popular to the obscure, an examination of 42 specimens of British TV science fiction from the BBC, ITV, and beyond: notable series, specials and one-off TV movies - coming soon!

AXI - RED DWARF - QUATERMASS - THE PRISONER - STAR COPS - THE OMEGA FACTOR - HY



"Star Trek" and "dystopia" aren't two flavors that blend easily, but just as Deep Space Nine mixed Trek with wartime melodrama, it can probably be made to work somehow. The movie-length pilot for the crowdfunded semi-pro project Star Trek: Renegades is yet another attempt at "darker, grittier" Star Trek. That's a formula that has worked well a handful of times in official studio-produced Trek, and has then been run nose-first into the ground: the sublime *Mirror*, *Mirror* was all but lampooned by a series of increasingly goofy follow-ups on Deep Space Nine, before being redeemed somewhat by a two-parter just before the series finale of *Enterprise*. Fan films have also tried their own hand at the *Mirror* universe (Starship Farragut's *For Want Of A Nail* and Star Trek Continues' superb *Fairest Of Them All*). Everyone talks about the optimism of Star Trek, and then seems to want to jettison it in favor of something more dangerous and sexy.

But *Renegades* dares to set its darker, grittier take on Trek in the "prime timeline", following up primarily on *Voyager* and elements of *DS9*. The latter, in introducing Starfleet's "black ops"

division, Section 31, though a page or two is borrowed from Pocket Books' post-series-finale *Voyager* "relaunch" novels, which suggested that Seven of Nine and any other liberated Borg might be seen by Starfleet as lab rats to dissect to gain an advantage against the next Borg attack.

That any part of Starfleet would be thinking like that at all is ironic, when the underpinning of *Renegades*' movie-length pilot episode is that the Federation and Starfleet are naively ignoring an impending threat to their all-important supply of starship-powering dilithium. Only Admiral Chekov perceives the threat, but his fellow admirals – including Owen Paris (Richard Herd), father of *Voyager*'s Tom Paris – think Chekov has become a tin-foil-hat-wearing relic. But not Tuvok; *Voyager*'s former security chief believes Chekov is onto something. They know exactly where the threat originates, and Tuvok knows of a misfit crew that can meet that threat head-on.

This argumentative crew includes Dr. Lucien (*Blade Runner*'s Sean Young), a disgraced former colleague of Holographic Doctor inventor Dr. Lewis Zimmerman (Robert Picardo, who puts in

a couple of cameo appearances), repatriated former Borg drone Icheb (Manu Intiraymi, reprising his recurring Voyager character and proving that he's got some *real* acting chops), Betazoid Ronara (Chasty Ballesteros), engineer Fixer (Edward Furlong, of *Terminator 2* and *American History X* fame), the prime-timeline version of Ragnar (former Enterprise semi-regular Gary Graham, reprising a role that is the only connection to Star Trek: Of Gods And Men, the Renegades producers' previous project), and tough-as-nails Lexxa Singh (Xena regular Adrienne Wilkinson), said to be the "bastard daughter of a genetic experiment," implying (but not coming right out and saying) that she's the offspring of Khan. Joining this crew briefly is a Cardassian named Garis, but he's the redshirt of the group – one, that makeup is outstanding (and therefore probably incredibly expensive), and two, actor Vic Mignogna is already plenty busy with Star Trek Continues.



Lexxa Singh (Adrienne Wilkinson) and Garis (Vic Mignogna): just another minor falling-out at the office

There's also a Bajoran as part of this crew, and as you can imagine if you've spent any time watching DS9, he's *delighted* to have Garis breathing the same air as him.

Lexxa's crew and her ship, the *Icarus*, are recruited to take out the dilithium-hoarding alien warlord (not to dinner, by the way), but without any kind of official blessing from Starfleet. This means that in addition to fighting Starfleet's enemies, they're fighting Starfleet itself, in the



We do 24<sup>th</sup> century Trek fan films with real sets now; real sets are cool

person of one-time Stargate SG-1 regular Corin Nemec. Don't call him Corky; he'll open fire on you with the entire arsenal of the ship he captains, the *Archer*. (The bridge of the *Archer*, incidentally, makes use of then-recently-recovered elements of the discarded *Enterprise-D* bridge set of Las Vegas' defunct Star Trek: The Experience attraction, offering some reality and scope to the proceedings without leaning on unconvincing virtual sets.)

Three years in the making, *Renegades* was crowdfunded on the premise that Tim Russ and the other makers of the show would be pitching it at CBS for broadcast. *But that's not how TV works, and that was never going to happen.* *Renegades* was always going to be, and remains, a fan film with some pro casting and some pro credits behind the scenes. The whole thing looks great, and ends with a nice dangling carrot setup for a series to follow (enough money was raised for further episodes). It's quite enjoyable though – a nice mix of the "prime universe" no longer being served by the studio, and the action and intrigue for which the Abrams movies strive. **A-**



# The Internet is Out. Time to Settle Some Scores.

Forum Trolls. Youtube Commentators. NeXT PC Enthusiasts. All infuriating in their own way on-line, but generally unavailable to take a lead pipe to the face in real-life. Usually. In an alternate future, the Internet is out. Not in the cutesy way where it comes back after you shut the router off for enough time to clear its cache from all your Rule 34. No, this is even affecting the Internet connections **at work**. Luckily, the six members of the local hacker-



space have gathered to right this wrong and break the face of all your hated enemies also now wandering aimlessly around outside. Your team includes Hackers, Electrical Engineers, Street Magicians and more. Wielding old computers, everyone will work together to correct this hellacious wrong. Welcome to **Cyberganked**, where everyone who's been aching for a beating lately gets sent straight back to the DARPANET.



*Battle a wide array of enemies in this turn-based RPG like Rootkit Bots and General Contractors.*



*Remember how much you loved CGA four-color graphics on your IBM PC/PCjr? Me either. I'm literally being held at gunpoint forced to type this and mime enthusiasm for the palette.*



**Linux, Mac &  
Windows woaaa  
im the font guy  
i love cyan**

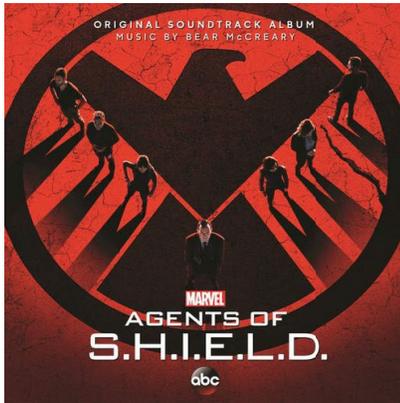
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# (((SOUND TREKS)))

## A bumper crop of tunes for imagined futures and pasts

by Earl Green



### Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D. music by Bear McCreary

It's tempting to listen to modern practitioners of orchestral action like Bear McCreary and Michael Giacchino and think "This is what John Williams would sound like today!" The only error in that thinking is that we're a couple of months away from John Williams showing us – perhaps one last time – what John Williams sounds like today. Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. is what Bear McCreary sounds like if you give him a giant, let's-save-the-world storyline and put money down for a sonic palette to match that. Nothing is off-limits for S.H.I.E.L.D. – bass and guitar, rumbling electronics and even a dubstep-inspired touch or two are all in play here. But mostly, it's a large orchestra thrashing out movie-quality music that does not, in any way, say "this is from a TV show". A long overdue treat – does this mean we might get his Walking Dead music soon? **A+**  
**GET IT IN THELOGBOOK.COM STORE**



### Ambition

music by Atanas Valkov

With a running time some seven times longer than the short film itself, this soundtrack isn't just for the European Space Agency-funded short film of the same name: it's a soundtrack for the real life ESA mission to a comet from which that five-minutes-and-change short film draws its inspiration. Incorporating sound clips from press conferences and the launch of Rosetta, the *Ambition* soundtrack is heavily electronic, but often strangely relaxing. I don't normally dig it when sound clips from a movie or other event are mixed in with the music, but here at least those clips are turned into samples and become part of the fabric of the music. (The actual soundtrack to *Ambition* itself comprises three tracks toward end of the album.) *Ambition* may not be to everyone's listening tastes, but it's pleasant and atmospheric. **B**  
**GET IT IN THELOGBOOK.COM STORE**



### Avengers: Age Of Ultron music by Brian Tyler and Danny Elfman

I have a love-hate relationship with the modern superhero movie. Marvel's movie universe has been batting about 850 out of 1000, though, so it's not a surprising place to find a superhero movie soundtrack that I enjoyed tremendously. Danny Elfman, the oft-absent but still-reigning king of movie superhero music, is back in business with *Age Of Ultron*, setting up many of the primary themes while Brian Tyler (*Terra Nova*, *Star Trek: Enterprise*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*) handles the heavy lifting for action scenes. In an era when four-color-inspired movies are desaturated almost to the point of being black and white, and the music often descends into a kind of Hans Zimmer-inspired equivalent of that desaturation, it's nice to hear a soundtrack that has a little color in its cheeks. **A**  
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### Defiance Season 2

music by Brendan McCreary

One of the most delightfully off-the-wall soundtracks I've ever heard, this is a collection of songs heard in the second season of Syfy's alien-occupied-Earth series, with virtually no score. Normally, this isn't my kind of soundtrack, except that Brendan McCreary has reworked every song in the style of the show's Earth setting, circa 2047 – rock is still around, but dubstep is almost old-fashioned. Unusual rhythmic patterns, exotic instruments, and bizarre synths are Defiance's musical future, accompanied by lyrics translated into the aliens' language. If you're unprepared to hear 4 Non Blondes' "What's Up" sung in Castithan, it feels a little bit like tuning into Bizarro World FM (an English version, still beautifully performed, is also included). Another highlight: Sinatra-esque crooning by cast member William Atherton, in character as Viceroy Mercado (thanks to Defiance, there's more to the guy's career than shutting down the Ghostbusters' power grid). Defiance takes its fictional immersion seriously, right down to its music. An unexpectedly fun listen. **B**

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### Doctor Who: Series 8

music by Murray Gold

Though Matt Smith's first season seemed to take a sidestep into sounds inspired by Doctor Who's radiophonic, synth-heavy past, the musical paradigm for the new Doctor Who series' first decade has always been John Williams: big, brassy action music, and choral doom when the occasion demands. Peter Capaldi's first season, however, seems to mark a major turn for new Doctor Who's musical style: the paradigm has shifted from Williams to a Hans Zimmer-inspired sound, more reliant on synths and urgent low cello ostinatos. Several cues seem to echo Doctor Who's 1980s sound, including the new theme tune arrangement. A suite of themes and variations of the musical signature of the new Doctor is more introspective than the in-your-face Smith-era "I Am The Doctor". The first two CDs cover the entirety of Capaldi's freshman year in the TARDIS, while the third presents virtually the complete score of his first Christmas special, *Last Christmas*. Inexplicably missing: Foxes' vocals on "Don't Stop Me Now"; an instrumental version appears instead. **A+**

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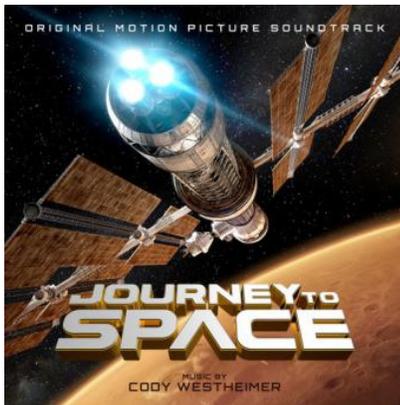


### He-Man And The Masters Of The Universe

music by Shuki Levy, Haim Saban & Erika Lane

While never really a devoted follower of the animated adventures of everyone's favorite mid-1980s action figure line, I can still admire the work that went into this 2-CD soundtrack, putting much of the show's music library at the fingertips of fans everywhere. (If only all of Filmation's output could be represented by a soundtrack...) Synths stand in for orchestral instruments frequently, emphasizing the sheer '80s-ness of the material's origin, but it's nice enough music and a pleasant listen. (To this day, my favorite pieces of music almost all have something to do with Orko.) The nearly obligatory liner notes booklet details the origins of both the show and its music, revealing that some of the material heard here was salvaged from vinyl (in a few places, this is actually quite apparent, but given the choice between a handful of pops and scratches, or no music at all, most will agree that it's better to have more music in the set.) It's a nostalgic collection that He-Man fans will love. **B+**

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### Journey To Space

music by Cody Westheimer

*Journey To Space* is one of many space PR films of the past decade to use the audiovisual playbook of Hollywood sci-fi to pitch real space exploration to the American public. Cody Westheimer's music from *Journey* certainly sounds like it belongs to a sci-fi epic; some tracks, such as "Extended Weightlessness", have that great nautical questing feel that typified James Horner's best genre scores. Collaborator Max Braverman, turns in a uniquely '80s-flavored synthpop-styled cue, "Building A Spacesuit".

One of the soundtrack's most thrilling cues is the minute-long "Mars", which takes the war march of Holst's "Mars: Bringer Of War" and cranks it out in more triumphant major keys than the uncertain minor key modulations of the original. Quoting Holst in a movie about Mars isn't the most original thing in the world; daring to reframe the "feel" of the whole piece is a bit braver.

Even if you haven't heard of or seen the movie, the *Journey To Space* soundtrack is a nicely space themed listen. Recommended. **A**  
**GET IT IN THELOGBOOK.COM STORE**

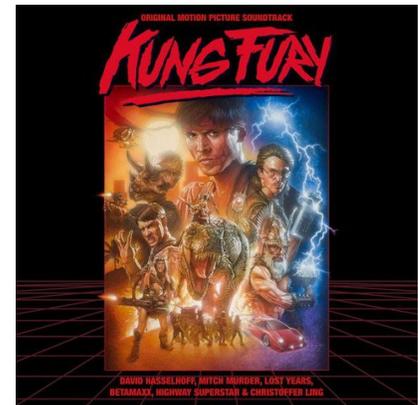


### Jurassic World

music by Michael Giacchino

Michael Giacchino is one of my favorite 21st century TV/film composers, but this is a case where I wouldn't want to be him: so much of the *Jurassic Park* "sound" was established by John Williams in the first movie that subsequent composers, whether creating music for movie sequels or video games, have had to either try with varying degrees of success to use the same musical lexicon, or delve into standard action-movie fare.

On the other hand, Giacchino's work has improved tremendously since the days when he scored the *Jurassic Park* video games in the '90s, and if you've been missing his signature "spooky" sound since *Lost* signed off, it's safe to say you'll love this soundtrack. Giacchino may not be "the new John Williams", but *Jurassic World* sees him graduating seamlessly from smoke monsters to velociraptors. The score's actually one of the best things about the movie; the only element that really comes up missing is a theme for the savage nobility of the prehistoric world and its inhabitants. **B**  
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### Kung Fury

music by Mitch Murder, et al.

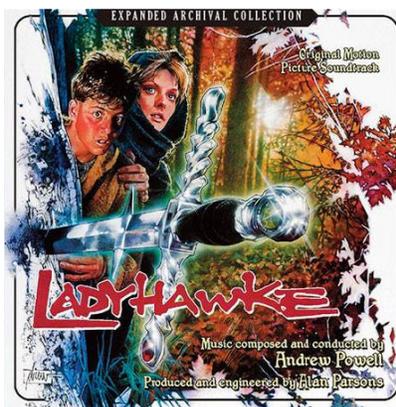
Released alongside the epic Kickstarted celebration of low-budget cinematic schlock, the official *Kung Fury* soundtrack is a pitch-perfect throwback to the budget-addled all-synthesizer scores that accompanied the aforementioned schlock. The centerpiece of this album, for many, is the '80s-style synth-rock anthem "True Survivor", fittingly sung by David Hasselhoff. The song isn't bad musically, but the every-cliché-imaginable lyrics and Hasselhoff's overdramatic take on it gives it that extra push into a giant fondue pot of '80s cheese. (Those requiring a Hasselhoff-free version can find an instrumental version in the "Enter The Fury" track.) The rest of the album is no slouch, with numerous specimens of modern synth virtuosity almost exactly recreating the almost-generic all-purpose synth-and-drum-machine action cues of yore. The soundtrack is the movie in microcosm: it celebrates the excesses of a bygone age of movie-making (and of movie music making for that matter). And naturally, it fits its movie like a glove. **A**  
**GET IT IN THELOGBOOK.COM STORE**



**The Last Starfighter**  
music by Craig Safan

Though an official soundtrack was released in the early days of movie scores on CD, a low sound mix and a presentation offering less than half of the material recorded for the movie always left the original *Last Starfighter* soundtrack feeling inadequate. Intrada has once again come to the rescue, offering the complete original score, freshly remastered, with a liner notes booklet that tells you more about the gestation of both movie and music than any DVD commentary track could ever manage. Craig Safan's ambition to play in John Williams' epic sonic sandbox was always obvious, and for much of the score he creates a densely orchestrated sound. Added to that are distinctly '80s elements as rapid-fire synth runs and drum machines, suggestive of the video game into which Alex finds himself propelled very much for real. After all these years, the main title march is still very memorable. With both a stage musical and a possible TV continuation in the works, it's a nice sonic reminder of where it all started. **A**

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**Ladyhawke**

music by Andrew Powell

Either an awkward or awesome fit for its movie, depending upon whom one asks, 1984's *Ladyhawke* veered away from the usual (indeed, almost stereotypical) Korngold-inspired heraldry expected of swords-and-sorcery films and, courtesy of composer Andrew Powell and his producer / collaborator Alan Parsons (of Alan Parsons Project fame), dared to score a period piece with synthesizers and rock music. The result is practically a lost Project album in style and execution. La-La Land Records expands the *Ladyhawke* score (last issued in the 1990s by GNP Crescendo) to two discs, including every note of the score, plus goodies such as demos, unused cues, and bite-sized edits of the movie's music intended for radio advertising. If you already like the score, this release will delight you: there's more where it came from, including fascinating alternate cues. If you didn't like the score to begin with, steer clear: nothing here is likely to change your mind about it unless you're prepared to go in with an open mind and open ears. **B+**

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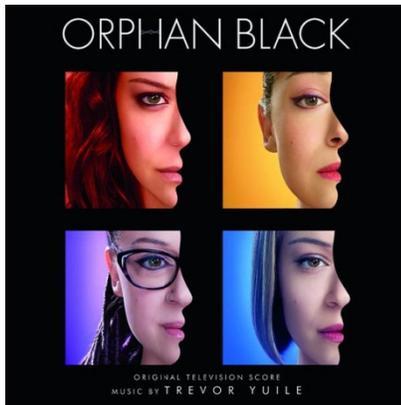


**Mad Max: Fury Road**

music by Tom Holkenborg

Available in a single-disc version with a healthy selection of music, or a double-disc deluxe edition that, at two hours, surely contains every note of music heard in the movie, Tom "Junkie XL" Holkenborg's score for *Mad Max: Fury Road* does an outstanding job of conveying the menace of the future wasteland, as well as the human drama within. I was expecting electronics, and there's no shortage of those, but I was stunned to hear just how orchestral the music was for much of the movie's running time. The soundtrack gives you a chance to hear those elements in more detail without competing with dialogue and sound effects. Most casual fans will find the single disc edition more than adequate; the deluxe edition is almost exhausting to listen to in a single sitting. But it's a movie score that stands up to repeat listening and close scrutiny. My advice to Tom Holkenborg: drop the "Junkie XL" moniker, because while he undoubtedly dipped into his bag of electronica tricks here, this is a major entry from a rising film scoring talent. **A+**

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**Orphan Black (score album)**  
music by Trevor Yuile

As distinctive as this show's music is, it's a bit of a mystery that it took until the eve of the third season for a soundtrack to be issued. Released alongside a separate album with songs featured in the series, this collection of highlights from Orphan Black's music is a nice cross-section of the show's house style: a bit of abstract EDM, occasional forays into more melodic and traditionally "soundtrackish" territory, and sound-design-inspired noise elements (another example of that would be nearly the entire soundtrack from *Gravity*). Most of it is as intriguing as the show that inspired it, and quite listenable; my one frustration with it is that Varese Sarabande still seems to think it's the mid-1990s, and that soundtrack albums have to be limited to 45 minutes in duration. CDs can hold 80 minutes of audio information. (And downloads? No such limitations.) It's a nearly antiquated limitation to adhere to – no doubt, Varese will double dip us at a later date to release an "expanded edition." **A-**

GET IT IN THELOGBOOK.COM STORE



**Outlander: Volume 1**  
music by Bear McCreary

After rising to fame and a cult following that adored his work on the reboot of *Battlestar Galactica*, Bear McCreary has become a prize catch to TV producers, working on everything from *The Walking Dead* to *Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.* It's not hard to draw a connection between the quality of a show and whether or not it has landed McCreary as its resident composer. *Outlander* sees the former *Battlestar* maestro rejoining his boss, showrunner Ronald D. Moore, and exploring a thoroughly Scottish sonic palette, though this is deftly mixed with more traditional western orchestral arrangements whenever the drama on screen calls for it. (The Scottish element is nothing new for McCreary, who made heavy use of Celtic instruments – including bagpipes! – in later seasons of *Battlestar Galactica*.) This album collects highlights from the first season's first batch of episodes (prior to the dreaded Christmas break); the 10+ minute "Veil of Time" track is worth the price of admission in and of itself. Now when can we expect volume two? **A**

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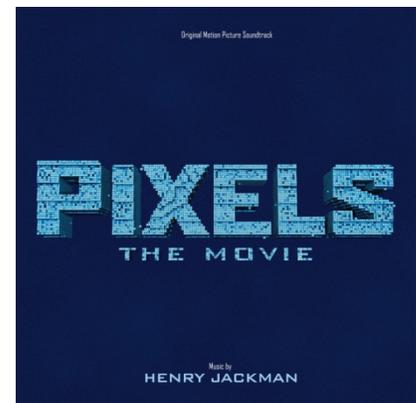


**Pac-Man Fever**  
(Eat 'Em Up 2015 Remix)

music by Buckner & Garcia

Not a soundtrack or even a soundtrack single in the strictest sense, this modern version of the 1982 novelty single adds edge (and a bit of rap). For a one-buck download timed to cash in on *Pixels* (which features Pac-Man), it's a fun listen. **B+**

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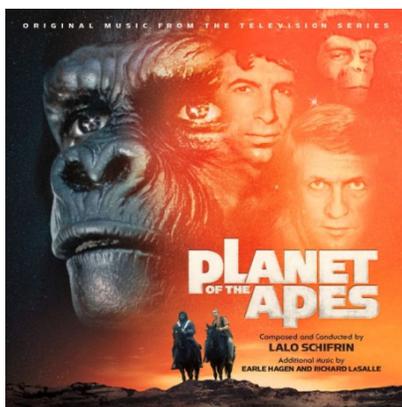


**Pixels**

music by Henry Jackman

The *Pixels* soundtrack release is a letdown. Lost in translation: much of the score is an orchestral overlay for the stomp-stomp-clap rhythm of Queen's "We Will Rock You" (not heard here). Chiptune would've helped; Waka Flocka Flame's "This Is Not A Game" single would've livened things up tremendously. Very average. **C**

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### **Planet Of The Apes: The Series**

music by Lalo Schifrin, Earle Hagen & Richard LaSalle

Released as a very limited edition (2000 copies) by La-La Land Records, this two-disc collection includes and expands upon the material already presented by Intrada Records on a single-CD release in 2005. Intrada's release included Lalo Schifrin's appropriately chaotic theme music and his music for the pilot episode, as well as a further episode score by Earle Hagen. This 2-CD release adds more music by the show's other composers, offering a classy time capsule of an era when synthesizers had yet to become routine instruments in film scoring. It's interesting to hear Schifrin and other composers try to alternate between "normal" 1970s orchestral scoring and something more akin to the tone set by Jerry Goldsmith's music from the first *Apes* movie. The music is often a bit sparse – small orchestral ensembles were often all the show budgeted for – and the feel is frequently downbeat and dissonant, much like the short-lived series itself. A treat for '70s SFTV soundtrack fans. **B**  
**GET IT IN THELOGBOOK.COM STORE**



### **The Ravolox Remixes** music by Dominic Glynn

A ridiculously enjoyable four track EP by late-era classic Doctor Who composer Dominic Glynn (*Trial Of A Time Lord*, *The Happiness Patrol*, *Dragonfire*, *Survival*), *The Ravolox Remixes* sees Glynn reconfiguring some of his soundtracks into something with a solid beat. *Survival* – the strongest score of the bunch in its original form – is the most remixable as well. **B**

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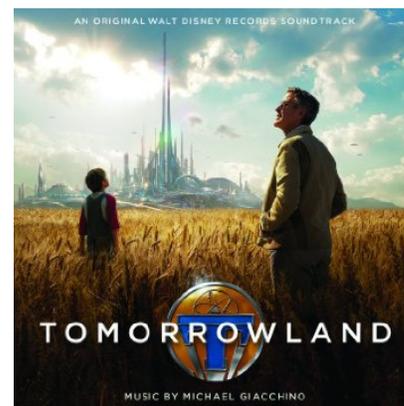


### **Star Trek: Renegades** music by Justin R. Durban

Available to Kickstarter donors and now on its own via iTunes and Amazon, the soundtrack to the dark pro-plus-fan-made Trek offshoot is naturally synth-orchestral in nature, but with thundering, warlike tribal rhythms

(perhaps inspired by the 21<sup>st</sup> century remake of *Battlestar Galactica*). There is also musical influence – and a new main title theme – from Berman-era Trek composer Dennis McCarthy, whose body of work often goes ridiculously unappreciated. Like the movie, *Renegades'* soundtrack is worth the download. **A-**

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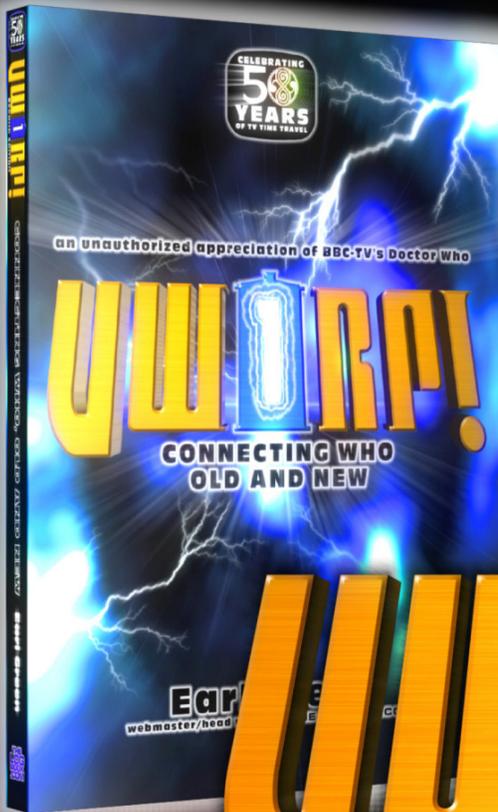


### **Tomorrowland**

music by Michael Giacchino

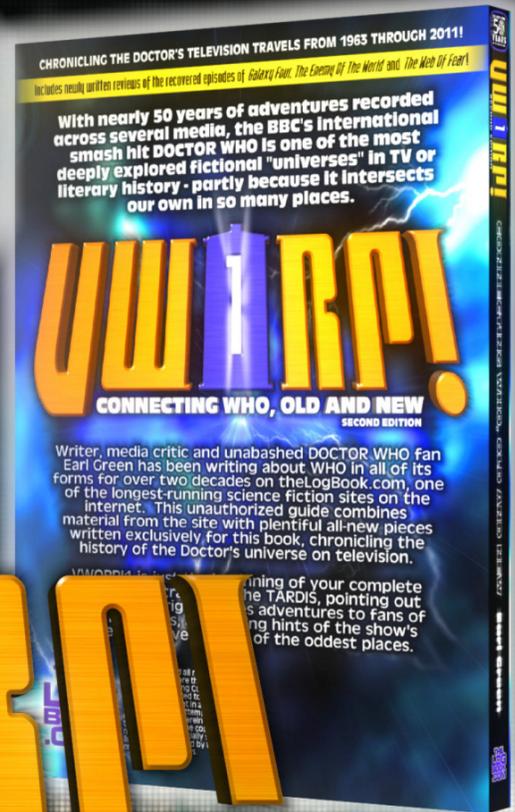
Possibly my favorite Giacchino soundtrack since his *Lost* days, *Tomorrowland* is everything that I look for in a genre soundtrack: wide-screen and wondrous, evoking the amazement of seeing a new world for the first time. That fits in with the movie's lament: whatever happened to our optimism for the future? A listen to the *Tomorrowland* soundtrack can do a lot to bring that optimism back; rather like the movie itself, I expect it'll go criminally overlooked. In the opening titles, Giacchino introduces us to a gorgeous main theme that underlies everything to come, lending itself to everything from tender moments to all-out action cues such as "Just Get In The Car". **A+**

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# PHOSPHOR DOT FOSSILS

Need new blood for your old consoles? We ogle the latest homebrew releases.

by Earl Green



## Death Race

Odyssey<sup>2</sup> / programmed by Ivan Machado

In the arcade, Exidy's *Death Race* was the first video game to draw protests for graphic violence (namely, players running down stick figures with their race cars, with the game's cabinet art describing those stick people as zombies, thus sanctioning the violence). *Death Race* was even the subject of an episode of Donahue, with anguished moms lining up to fire the first volley in the war against violent video games. But Donahue is no longer on the air, *Death Race* is no longer in most arcades, and the violence has now become photorealistic survival horror and military combat action. As a game leaning on discrete logic rather than a microchip, *Death Race* can't even be played in emulation...but now it can be played in this faithful Odyssey<sup>2</sup> homebrew. It's a perfect fit for the limited graphics capabilities of Magnavox's underdog console: many an Odyssey<sup>2</sup> title had similarly limited graphics and made two-person play mandatory. It's like *Death Race* was meant to be on the Odyssey<sup>2</sup> all along. **A**

**DEATH RACE IS AVAILABLE FROM 2600CONNECTION.COM  
(TITLE NOW SOLD OUT)**



## Dungeon Stalker

Atari 7800 / programmed by Steve Engelhardt & Mike Saarna

Based on the Intellivision classic *Night Stalker* (which was also translated in vastly-scaled-down form to the Atari 2600 back in the day), *Dungeon Crawler* puts you back in the maze with 'bots, bats, and bullets...but never enough bullets. You have limited ammo (this is one of a handful of games from the '80s that I can think of where ammo is a limited commodity), and if you run out, it becomes a game of just evading everything until the next ammo drop randomly appears (if not in harm's way, then very near harm's way).

*Dungeon Crawler* makes good use of the 7800's graphics, surpassing the look of both the 2600 version and the Intellivision original. It's a nicely done port of an old favorite. I also appreciated some of the unusual customizing touches – you can select the color of the background of the maze playing field, for example. Some of us old gamers have eyes that aren't getting younger; these options are nice to have. **WIP**

**FOLLOW THE PROGRESS OF DUNGEON STALKER  
AT ATARIAGE.COM**



### K.C. Munchkin

Atari 7800 / programmed by Bob DeCrescenzo

The Atari 7800 was the Rip Van Winkle of the classic console world. Put into deep freeze by the incoming Tramiel administration, the 7800 was awoken by that same management regime when the whole “Atari does computers now, not video games” strategy didn’t work out; when the 7800 – developed and market tested in 1984 – was revived, it was thrust into a late-’80s world where it had the more powerful Nintendo Entertainment System for competition.

In that time, Namco had reclaimed the *Pac-Man* home video game license, and Atari no longer had the rights to produce the game for its own systems, such as the 7800. They could have done this instead: much like the underdog *Odyssey<sup>2</sup>* (which Atari itself eventually chased off the market), make a “near beer” version of *Pac-Man* that introduces a few new twists. *K.C. Munchkin* was one of the highlights of the *Odyssey<sup>2</sup>* library, and it’s now a gem of the 7800 library as well, updating the character graphics while retaining the look, feel and features of the *Odyssey<sup>2</sup>* version. The mazes – and the option to make the maze walls invisible – are all recreated perfectly, and even the maze editing feature is faithfully duplicated. There’s something satisfyingly vindicating – and tragically overdue – about Atari console owners ooh-ing and aah-ing over a port of an *Odyssey<sup>2</sup>* game, but for that port to be so remarkably true to the original is simply astounding. *Odyssey<sup>2</sup>* fans can rejoice...and they can unashamedly step up to try out this great new take on an old favorite. Now when do 7800 owners get *K.C.’s Krazy Chase*? **A+**

**K.C. MUNCHKIN IS AVAILABLE FROM ATARIAGE.COM**



### Lawless Legends

Apple II / designed and programmed by Seth Sternberger, Martin Haye, Brendan Robert, David Schmenk & Andy Hogan

Programmed for the Apple II and deliberately intended to evoke the feel of such windowed computer RPGs as the *Bard’s Tale* series, *Lawless Legends* is still a work in progress, but the beta build we got to play is *very* promising.

Combining a graphical window with textual descriptions, *Lawless Legends* is a throwback to gaming, 1983 style. Clearly divided windows allow you to monitor the stats of each member of your adventuring party, as well as their movements and interactions with the world around them.

The first-person graphics are nicely done in a way that makes the limited six-color Apple II hi-res mode color palette seem like it’s not that much of a limitation. As with *Bard’s Tale*, players have to turn around to look at their surroundings, so it’s nice that those surroundings are rendered with some style.

Normally I wouldn’t devote column space to an unfinished project, but keep your eyes on this one – the beta build is more polished than some finished products I’ve seen. Work is ongoing, such as level design and the addition of animated elements in the window view of the party’s surroundings, and *Lawless Legends* could be the biggest thing in Apple II software homebrew in years. **(WIP)**

**FOLLOW THE PROGRESS OF LAWLESS LEGENDS AT  
LAWLESSLEGENDS.WORDPRESS.COM**



**Moon Cresta**

Atari 7800 / programmed by Bob DeCrescenzo  
Quite simply one of the most superb arcade-to-console ports ever made on an Atari platform, whether cranked out professionally or as a homebrew, *Moon Cresta* is a knockout on the Atari 7800.

Not only were the enemy movement patterns closely studied by the programmer by watching the arcade game in emulation and taking notes, this *Moon Cresta* even feels like an arcade game, with the traditional raster arcade font faithfully duplicated in almost-fetishist detail. Selectable skill levels take the sting off of the coin-op's brutal difficulty.

If more Atari 7800 arcade ports had been made like this, this console really could have been a contender when it was revived in the heyday of the NES. ? **A+**

**MOON CRESTA IS AVAILABLE FROM ATARIAGE.COM**



**Rally X**

Atari 2600 / programmed by Ed Fries  
Now that there's a homebrew version of *Rally-X*, I find myself wondering why this didn't happen back in the day? Especially if Atari and Namco had "an arrangement" (one which, famously, landed the home console rights to *Pac-Man* in Atari's lap).

*Rally-X* had been "unofficially" ported to consoles and computers (see also: *Radar Rat Race* for the Commodore 64, because radar and rodentia fit together like freshwater fish and particle accelerators), but even a simple port like this one would have been a slam dunk for the 2600 (and probably would have raised *Rally-X's* stock in the arcade as well).

Ed Fries' faithful home version not only keeps the arcade game's nuances intact, but gives it a "look" accurate to other arcade-to-VCS ports circa 1981. **A**

**RALLY-X IS AVAILABLE FROM ATARIAGE.COM**

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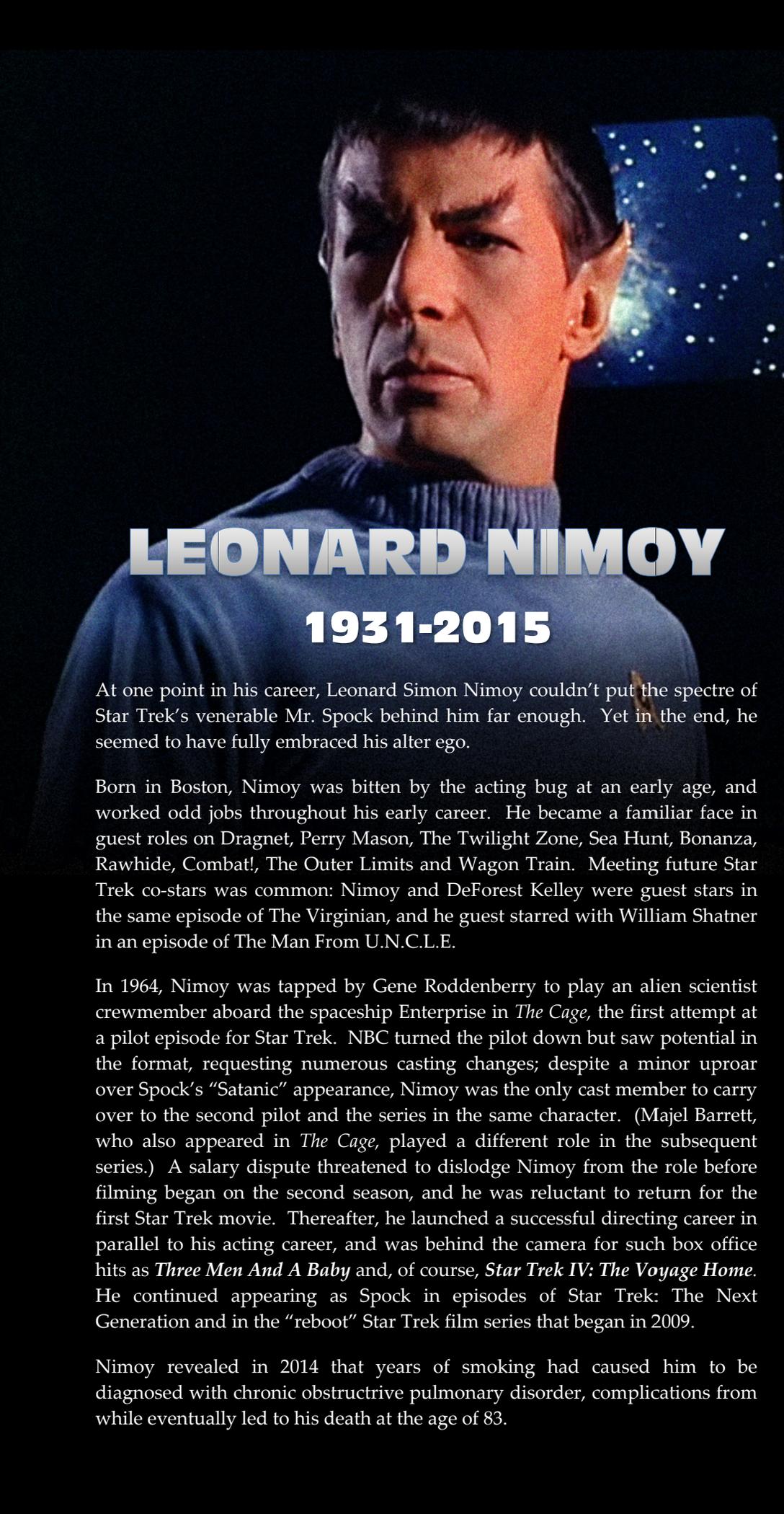
The production of this issue of the LogBook.com 'zine wasn't meant to take as long as it takes to have a baby. Early in 2015, the deaths of such major players in the science fiction and fantasy genres as Leonard Nimoy and Terry Pratchett made it evident that a hefty chunk of the news briefs section at the beginning of the issue would be devoted to obituaries.

And then it just kept happening. And we kept losing them.

As the classics of the genre age, whether on film or in print or in other media, the giants of that genre also age, and eventually they leave us. 2015 has been a particularly painful year in that regard. Writers and directors and actors and programmers and designers and musicians whose work we've enjoyed for decades, whose introduction of new innovations of style and nuance have informed everything that has followed, have crowded the outbound train this year. The void left by their absence can't be filled.

Rather than a particularly morose news briefs section weighed down by a huge number of obituaries, I thought it might be more fitting to let the news briefs be the home of wonder and excitement, and to put the tributes in their own section, for a less jarring and perhaps more respectful experience. The same idea seems to work for the major media awards shows year after year; as is the case with those tributes and the people who decide who "makes the cut", I'm almost certain that I will probably have left someone out. Any such omission is completely unintentional.

Join us now for the print equivalent of a moment of silence for those lost in 2015.



# LEONARD NIMOY

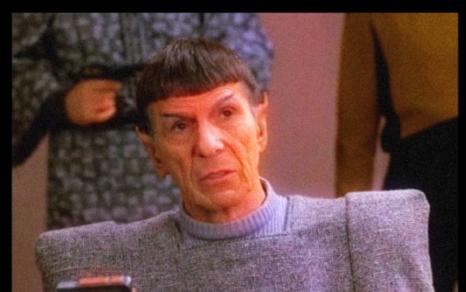
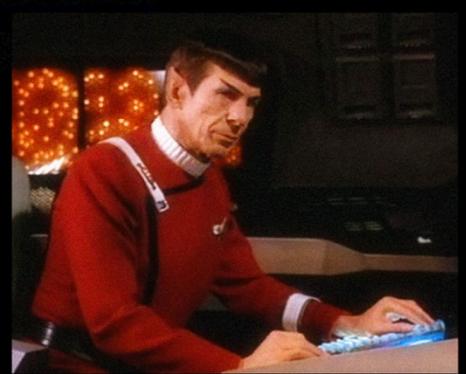
1931-2015

At one point in his career, Leonard Simon Nimoy couldn't put the spectre of Star Trek's venerable Mr. Spock behind him far enough. Yet in the end, he seemed to have fully embraced his alter ego.

Born in Boston, Nimoy was bitten by the acting bug at an early age, and worked odd jobs throughout his early career. He became a familiar face in guest roles on *Dragnet*, *Perry Mason*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Sea Hunt*, *Bonanza*, *Rawhide*, *Combat!*, *The Outer Limits* and *Wagon Train*. Meeting future Star Trek co-stars was common: Nimoy and DeForest Kelley were guest stars in the same episode of *The Virginian*, and he guest starred with William Shatner in an episode of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*

In 1964, Nimoy was tapped by Gene Roddenberry to play an alien scientist crewmember aboard the spaceship *Enterprise* in *The Cage*, the first attempt at a pilot episode for Star Trek. NBC turned the pilot down but saw potential in the format, requesting numerous casting changes; despite a minor uproar over Spock's "Satanic" appearance, Nimoy was the only cast member to carry over to the second pilot and the series in the same character. (Majel Barrett, who also appeared in *The Cage*, played a different role in the subsequent series.) A salary dispute threatened to dislodge Nimoy from the role before filming began on the second season, and he was reluctant to return for the first Star Trek movie. Thereafter, he launched a successful directing career in parallel to his acting career, and was behind the camera for such box office hits as *Three Men And A Baby* and, of course, *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*. He continued appearing as Spock in episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and in the "reboot" Star Trek film series that began in 2009.

Nimoy revealed in 2014 that years of smoking had caused him to be diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder, complications from while eventually led to his death at the age of 83.



# SIR TERRY PRATCHETT

## 1948-2015



The bestselling author of the 1990s in the U.K., Sir Terry Pratchett had been writing and publishing since his teens, and was known for saying that he learned more in libraries than he did in school. His first full-length novel was published in 1971, but the first book in the Discworld fantasy series for which he was best known didn't appear until 1983. Even though he maintained a pace of writing and publishing two novels every year, he continued working as a journalist and as a local electric utility's public information officer through 1987. Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he began suffering symptoms of an early onset of Alzheimer's Disease, initially diagnosed as the after-effects of a stroke. An early adopter of computers and word processors as writing tools, he began to rely on dictation software to write his books as the disease advanced. Sir Terry Pratchett died in his home at the age of 66.

IN MEMORIAM

# GRACE LEE WHITNEY

## 1930-2015



A familiar face during Star Trek's formative first season, where she guest starred as Yeoman Janice Rand, Grace Lee Whitney died on May 1<sup>st</sup> at the age of 85. A singer as well as an actress, she made guest appearances in late '50s and early '60s TV and movies, including *The Outer Limits* and *Some Like It Hot*, before landing a role on Star Trek and being heavily featured in publicity surrounding the show's launch. According to her autobiography, she was dismissed after appearing in only eight episodes and suffering a sexual assault at the hands of an unnamed member of the show's production team. By her own admission, she developed dependencies on drugs and alcohol afterward, but went into rehab before appearing in several of the Star Trek films. She also reprised the role of Janice Rand in an episode of *Star Trek: Voyager* and some fan-made productions in the past decade.

# JAMES HORNER

## 1953-2015

From working on low-budget genre knockoffs produced by Roger Corman, to crafting Academy Award-winning music scores to the highest-grossing films in history, James Horner was as close to a superstar in his own right as a film music composer could be.

Horner's work on *Battle Beyond The Stars* for Corman – who instructed him to all but rip off Jerry Goldsmith's music from *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* – brought Horner to the attention of director Nicholas Meyer, who hired him to score *Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan* in 1982.



The popularity of that movie led to other assignments, both genre and otherwise – *Krull*, *Cocoon*, *Star Trek III*, *Commando*, and others – but it was *Aliens*, a sequel to

Ridley Scott's SF/horror classic *Alien*, that introduced Horner to director James Cameron. Cameron didn't employ Horner again until 1997, but the movie in question was *Titanic*, which won an Oscar and spawned a hit song co-written by Horner. Horner and James Cameron collaborated again for *Avatar* (2009), whose score earned an Oscar nomination. His other Oscar-nominated music included *An American Tail*, *Field Of Dreams*, *Braveheart*, *Apollo 13*, and *A Beautiful Mind*.

Horner died when his private plane crashed on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015.

## IN MEMORIAM

# DR. CLAUDIA ALEXANDER

## 1959-2015



Renowned throughout NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory as one of its finest research scientists, Dr. Claudia Alexander died at the age of 56 while still serving as the chief scientist of a suite of U.S.-provided instruments aboard the European Space Agency's history-making Rosetta mission to Comet 67/P. But her career studying the geophysical processes of other bodies in the solar system began by turning her parents' college advice – to study something "useful" like engineering – on its ear. Instead of civil engineering, she studied engineering at NASA's Ames

Research Center, where it was quickly discovered that her real aptitude was in planetary science. After graduation, she went to work at JPL, where she became a member of the Galileo plasma instrument science team. By the end of the Galileo mission in 2003, she was the overall manager of that mission to Jupiter.

When not blazing her trail through the solar system, Dr. Alexander was an avid horseback rider, as well as a science fiction author (under a pseudonym).

## STEVE BRISTOW 1949-2015



One of Atari's first employees, Steve Bristow was an engineer and designer whose hardware and game concepts had a seismic effect not just on Atari's output, but the entire video game industry.

Bristow's first exposure to Atari co-founder Nolan Bushnell happened before Atari existed: he helped Bushnell to create the first mass-produced coin-op video game, *Computer Space*, which was released in 1971. Though he was working at Ampex at the time, Bristow followed Bushnell to Nutting & Associates (the company which manufactured *Computer Space*), which he left once Atari was up and running.

Bristow's first original game design, *Tank!*, emerged from "Kee Games" (a "rival" company run from within Atari to circumvent the distribution practices still in place from the pinball industry). Kee "merged" with Atari, where Bristow created a two-player black & white football game with a unique new controller called a trackball. He also had a hand in the creation of *Breakout*, as well as the design of the venerable Atari Video Computer System console which dominated the early '80s.

## HARVE BENNETT 1930-2015



By the time he was headhunted from Columbia Pictures' TV department to produce the first *Star Trek* movie sequel, Harve Bennett was no stranger to production or to science fiction. He had worked on *The Six Million Dollar Man* (whose opening narration he also voiced), *The Bionic Woman*, *Gemini Man*, and the 1970s TV adaptation of *The Invisible Man*.

He responded to a personal challenge from Paramount executives to make a better movie than 1979's *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, for only a fraction of that movie's budget. His TV background helped him avoid the first movie's cost overruns, while his experience with more compact storytelling resulted in a leaner but – for most moviegoers and certainly for most *Star Trek* fans –

more meaningful and satisfying experience. It was Bennett who decided to sequelize not just the first *Trek* movie, but an episode of the TV series, resulting in the very successful *Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan*.

Bennett stayed to produce the next three *Star Trek* films, but balked at the speed with which Paramount wanted *Star Trek VI* delivered (to meet a deadline tied to the TV series' 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary) and left the franchise behind. But thanks to Bennett's successes with the *Star Trek* films, especially runaway hit *Star Trek IV*, *Star Trek* was once again a profitable concern, one on which the studio decided to capitalize with a TV relaunch in 1987, leading to the *Star Trek* franchise as we now know it.

# BARRY NEWBERY

## 1927-2015

Veteran BBC set designer Barry Newbery was in on the ground floor of BBC drama production, joining the British broadcaster as a staff designer in the late '50s.

Much like the earliest passengers aboard the Doctor's time machine, Newbery was swept into the TARDIS abruptly, but in his case thanks to the departure of his predecessor, Peter Brachaki. Brachaki left an indelible imprint by designing the first iteration of the TARDIS console room, but Newbery found himself having to create the remainder of the Doctor's first adventure, taking



over as the set designer for parts two through four of the story now commonly referred to as *An Unearthly Child*. Newbery impressed the series' production team, and his services were quickly engaged for further travels

in the TARDIS, including *Marco Polo* and *The Aztecs* in the show's first season, and several further first Doctor stories (*The Crusade*, *The Time Meddler*, *The Daleks' Masterplan*, *The Ark*, and *The Gunfighters*). Newbery went on to other BBC dramas such as *Doomwatch*, *Paul Temple*, and *The Onedin Line*, but returned to Doctor Who often over the years: *The Dominators*, *Doctor Who And The Silurians*, *The Brain Of Morbius*, *Masque Of Mandragora*, and *The Invisible Enemy*. His last Doctor Who credit, and one of his final credits overall, was 1984's two-parter *The Awakening*.

### IN MEMORIAM

# MAURICE HURLEY

## 1939-2015

Writer and producer Maurice Hurley already had a history with some of TV's biggest 1980s success stories prior to signing on for a tumultuous tour of duty aboard Star Trek: The Next Generation's *Enterprise*. A veteran of such hit shows as *The Equalizer* and *Miami Vice*, Hurley brought a strong story sense to TNG, but often found himself clashing with series creator Gene Roddenberry's insistence that the more enlightened human characters of TNG's 24<sup>th</sup> century setting would be above petty conflicts – something which many



prospective writers for the show felt eliminated any opportunity for drama.

His time at TNG lasted only the first two seasons of the show, but Hurley's work left a huge mark on

the remainder of the Star Trek franchise. His scripts introduced the characters of Lore (Data's evil twin android "brother") and the all-conquering Borg, which continued to appear even into the final Star Trek series to date, *Enterprise*.

After hand-picking his own successor, writer Michael Piller, Hurley left Star Trek: TNG to work on such series as *Kung Fu: The Legend Continues*, *Pointman*, *Baywatch*, *Baywatch Nights*, *La Femme Nikita*, and *24*.

# SIR CHRISTOPHER LEE

## 1922-2015



A decorated World War II veteran who opted never to speak about his time working in British intelligence, Christopher Lee didn't embark on a full-time acting career until afterward, when he struggled with the common postwar malaise of trying to ease back into life in peacetime. Though initially told his height was a liability, Lee won a role for which it wasn't: that of the monster created by Dr. Frankenstein for Hammer Studios. Hammer later cast him as Count Dracula in a series of movies, often opposite Peter Cushing's Van Helsing. The movies offered little in the way of dialogue, though Lee and Cushing become lifelong friends. In the 1970s, Lee moved to America to get away from being typecast in British horror movies. A steady string of work led to a return to genre movies in *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy and the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy. He also recorded heavy metal albums, including a selection of metal Christmas carol covers.

IN MEMORIAM

# YVONNE CRAIG

## 1930-2015

Initially embarking on a career as a ballet dancer, Yvonne Craig was a rising international star in that field when backstage drama convinced her to return to the U.S., where she expected to resume her dance career. Instead, Hollywood found her, and she became a familiar face on TV (Perry Mason, Dobie Gillis, The Man From U.N.C.L.E.) and on the big screen (*Gidget*, the Elvis films *Kissin' Cousins* and *It Happened At The World's Fair*, and *Mars Needs Women*) in the late 1950s and early '60s. As the popular Batman TV series entered its third season with declining ratings, she was added to the cast as Batgirl (a.k.a. Commissioner Gordon's daughter Barbara by day), and while she proved to be a popular addition, the series had run its course by the end of that season. She also appeared in the 1969 Star Trek episode *Whom Gods Destroy*, *The Mod Squad*, *Love American Style*, *Kojak*, and *The Six Million Dollar Man*. Following her Hollywood heyday, she went into business for herself, first as a producer and then ultimate branching out into real estate. She died on August 17<sup>th</sup>.



## PETE KAUFFMAN 1949-2015

When the arcade game's first boom happened, a big bang ignited by the arrival of *Pong*, Pete Kauffman made sure that Ramtek was there to take part, though it soon became apparent that Ramtek was too risk-adverse to innovate in the burgeoning new medium. Kauffman left Ramtek to form a newer, edgier company, Exidy (short for Excellence in Dynamics), to shake up arcade gaming. One of Exidy's earliest coin-op games, *Death Race*, was a big bang of its own, igniting the controversy over violence in video games that continues to this day (thanks to its game play involving running over stick figures with cars). Exidy's later fare was colorful and more mainstream, with games such as *Venture*, *Mouse Trap*, *Pepper II*, and *Crossbow* attaining cult popularity.

## TANITH LEE 1947-2015

Bitten early by the writing bug despite getting a late start on learning to read, novelist Tanith Lee broke into fantasy fiction with the 1975 novel *The Birthgrave*, which was published in the U.S. after she failed to find an interested publisher in her native England. Later works included *Night's Master* (1978), *The Silver Metal Lover* (1981), and other series and stand-alone books. She also wrote two episodes of the BBC's *Blake's 7*, and submitted an ultimately rejected storyline to *Doctor Who* in the 1980s.

## PATRICK MACNEE 1922-2015



Known to millions as the debonair, dangerous secret agent John Steed from ITV's *The Avengers*, actor Patrick Macnee had to put his early acting career on hold to serve in the Royal Navy in World War II. Rising to the rank of Lieutenant as a torpedo boat navigator, Macnee was hospitalized when his ship was called up for its final mission, one which saw the loss of both ship and crew on D-Day.

Returning to the stage and the studio, Macnee was in demand on both sides of the Atlantic, starring in an early *Twilight Zone* episode and an installment of *One Step Beyond*, before returning to the U.K. to produce a TV adaptation of Winston Churchill's wartime memoirs. During this project, Macnee was approached for a role in *The Avengers*, a spinoff of the defunct ITV series *Police Surgeon*,

starring Ian Hendry. Macnee's character, John Steed, was envisioned as a mysterious but capable sidekick. Hendry left at the end of the first season in 1961, leaving Macnee to take the reins of the show, which quickly morphed into a light-hearted spy thriller with a succession of female co-stars – Honor Blackman, Diana Rigg, and Linda Thorson. *The Avengers* ran until 1969, during which Macnee, changed by his wartime experiences, broke with tradition by insisting that superspy John Steed would *never* carry a gun.

With a long-running worldwide hit behind him, Macnee went on to guest star in *Columbo*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and a string of TV movies playing Watson to Christopher Lee's Sherlock Holmes.

# WES CRAVEN

## 1939-2015

The twisted but brilliant director of trend-setting, game-changing horror film franchises such as *A Nightmare On Elm Street* and *Scream* lost his own nightmare battle with cancer at the age of 76.

Craven broke into the industry as a film editor, working first on industrial films and then spending some time in the adult film industry (though this is not a period of his career upon which he was ever keen to elaborate).



His first film as a director, 1972's *Last House On The Left*, cemented his future in the horror genre.

Later works included 1977's *The Hills Have Eyes*, 1982's *Swamp Thing*, and other projects, but it was 1984's *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, which he wrote and directed, that boosted his visibility. Later movies included *The Serpent And The Rainbow* (1988), *Wes Craven's New Nightmare* (1994), and *The People Under The Stairs* (1991), and he directed episodes of *Nightmare Café* and the '80s revival of *The Twilight Zone*.

### IN MEMORIAM

# SATORU IWATA

## 1959-2015

If any one person can claim credit for Nintendo's recent successes, company CEO Satoru Iwata is high on the list of potential candidates for that description. He died on July 11<sup>th</sup> as the result of complications from gall bladder surgery.

As a producer, Iwata oversaw major entries in some of Nintendo's most popular franchises, including *Earthbound*, *Kirby*, *Super Smash Bros.* and *Pokémon*. At the time, he was head of HAL Laboratories, a developer whose work was published games for Nintendo consoles, exclusively through Nintendo. This close partnership with Nintendo led to Iwata replacing outgoing longtime



Nintendo CEO Hiroshi Yamauchi as the head of the company's worldwide operations in 2002.

It was on Iwata's watch that Nintendo abandoned its venerable Game Boy portable video game architecture in favor of a double-screen, touch-screen-driven system called the Nintendo DS. Similarly,

work on Project Revolution, a motion-sensor controller add-on for the Nintendo GameCube, was redirected; Revolution would now be its own hardware platform, backward-compatible with GameCube, called the Nintendo Wii.

Iwata also routinely interacted with gamers and fans via the internet, rather than having underlings mediate these interactions for him.

Despite slow sales of the WiiU and 3DS, Iwata had recently announced Nintendo's first forays into cell phone gaming, and initiated development of the hugely popular Amiibo collectible figurines.

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Well, this took a little while.

Originally intended to be the “spring 2015” edition of the e-zine, this gradually slid into “summer 2015” thanks to a random roller coaster of short-term work that's had your editor doing everything from installing computers in a new hospital emergency room, to running a teleprompter for CEOs and governors, to playing laser tag with the National Guard. Anything for a buck, really. But also a very random schedule involving a lot of travel. As much as I wish I could put Otto Pilot in control and use that drive time to write and lay out articles, we don't have the technology yet.



With summer nearly at an end, it became obvious that “summer 2015” wasn't going to fit anymore either, so allow me to present the “equinox 2015” edition (to be followed, no doubt, by the “solstice 2016” edition). It's a little tongue-in-cheek admission that this publication has No Fixed Schedule. It's probably a good thing I'm not attempting to do a Patreon; everyone would want their money back.

The theme this time around is that there *is no* theme. I suppose you could connect the article on the evolution of space probes with the article about the Alpha Probe, but...nah. You're welcome to try to theme it however you like, though. Everyone got to suggest their own stuff, while I was off generating other material. (The moment Rob O'Hara got the words “Fisher-Price Adventure People” out of his mouth, I just said “Yes! Go do that.” Because who doesn't like Fisher-Price Adventure People with an awesome spaceship? *Only people who have neither a soul nor an awesome spaceship loaded with Fisher-Price Adventure People, that's who.*)

Until the next irregularly scheduled issue of theLogBook.com 'zine, friends, be kind to one another and enjoy. It's a wild universe out there, and we're only an asteroid away from having our lease revoked. ☹

## 'ZINE STAFF

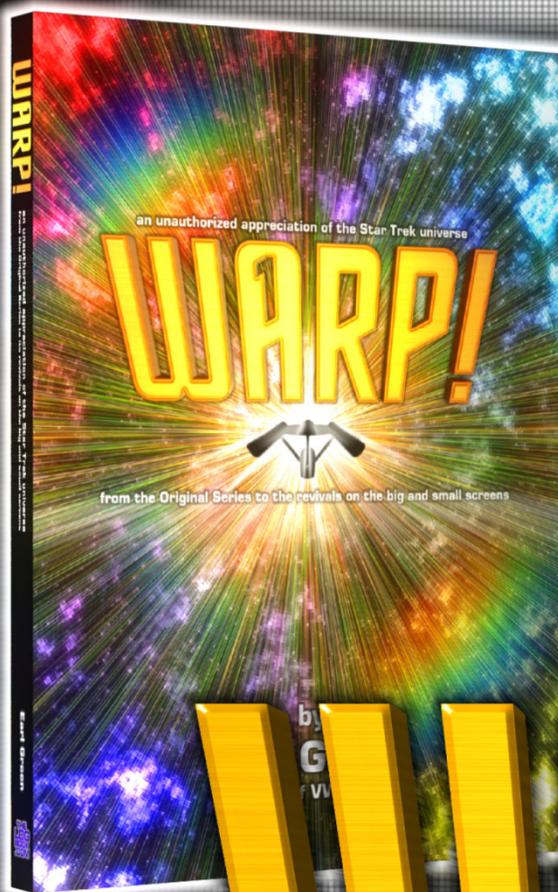
**EARL GREEN:** Earl founded theLogBook as a series of files popular on computer bulletin board systems in the late 1980s, and keeps the project alive as a sprawling web site 25 years later. A former TV writer/producer and voice-over guy, he has written two books on the subject of Doctor Who, [VWORP!1](#) and [VWORP!2](#), with more books in the works. He also wrote and produced the Phosphor Dot Fossils video game documentary DVDs.

**ROB O'HARA:** Rob O'Hara is the author of [Commodork: Sordid Tales from a BBS Junkie](#) and [Invading Spaces: A Beginner's Guide to Collecting Arcade Games](#). When not updating his own website (robohara.com), Rob enjoys collecting and playing old video, computer, and arcade games. Rob is an avid podcaster and currently hosts multiple shows including You Don't Know Flack, Sprite Castle, Throwback Reviews and Rusted Metal. Rob enjoys eating sushi but not walks on the beach. Or going outside, really.

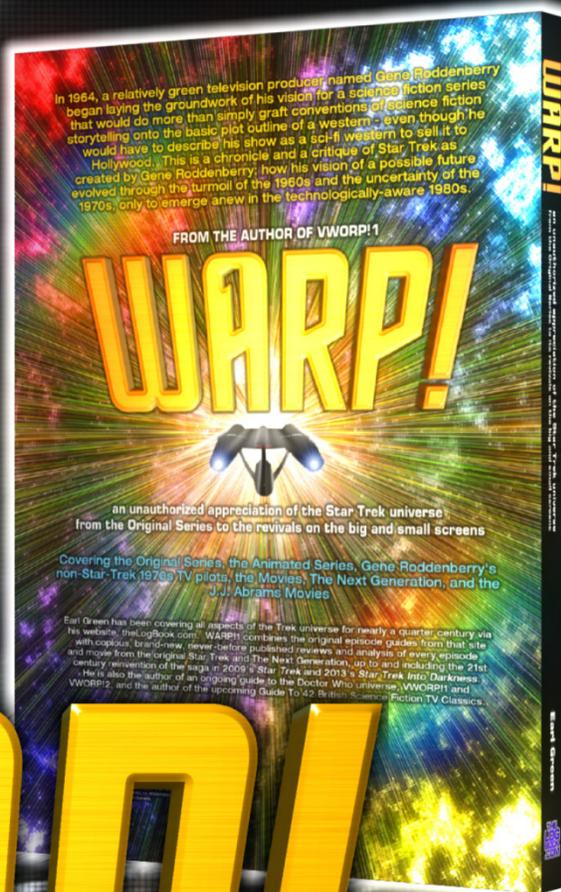
**ROB HEYMAN:** Rob is a journalist and freelance entertainment critic, who has served as a staff writer for theLogBook since 1994. He is also a regular columnist for the Star Trek web site TrekCore. He lives in New Jersey.

**ROBERT PARSON:** Robert has a taste for obscure movies and TV shows. He was a soft spot in his heart for Japanese monster movies and Cold War era nuclear scare movies. Putting his investigative skills to work, he spent endless hours researching the job status of Barney Rubble only to conclude that Barney has no job.

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# WARP!

New adventures are in store for the starship *Enterprise*, and the LogBook.com creator and curator Earl Green brings you a guide to **Star Trek** old and new in the same format as VWORP! (in fact, the two are compatible and cross-referenced).

Starting with WARP! I, the WARP! books will cover the entire **Star Trek** franchise, complete with episode-by-episode reviews and behind-the-scenes notes. The first volume covers classic TV **Star Trek** and the series of movies that continued its story, the oft-overlooked animated series, **The Next Generation**, the modern movie reboot of the classic series, and a look at **Gene Roddenberry's** other pilots and projects both before and after **Star Trek's** original 1960s run.

Also covered will be the glut of fan films, surprisingly slick "amateur" productions that have arisen to satisfy fans' hunger for new TV-style **Star Trek** was the franchise is officially reborn as a series of movies.

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