

LOGBOOK

Volume One

The Sci-Fi/Fantasy Media Fanzine for the Fort Smith Area

Number 4

STAR TREK GENERATIONS™ Special NO-Preview Issue!

Seeing how last issue promised previews of *Star Trek: Generations*, some of you would probably like to know what happened to that issue.

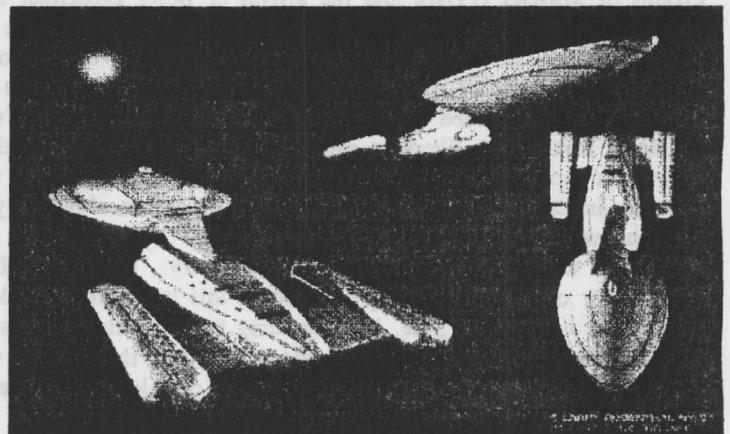
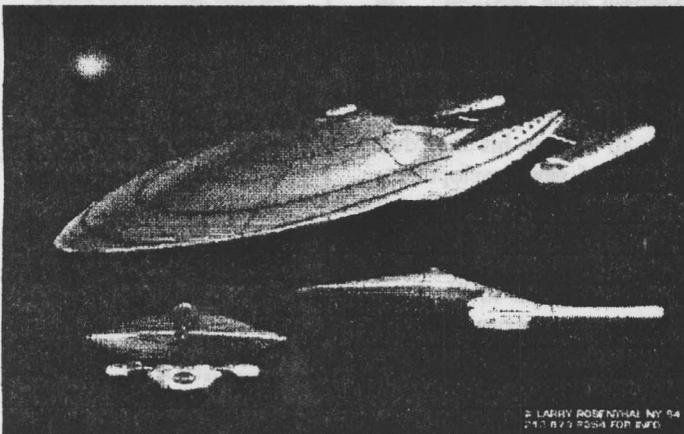
The editorial decision was made while we were working on this issue to make a U-turn and do a NO-preview issue. A number of articles about the film have cropped up elsewhere, all but blowing the plot of the film wide open. With all the news that's made it to print about *Star Trek: Generations*, you almost have to be hiding under a rock not to know what's going to happen.

Still, we're not completely ignoring the movie; you'll find a review of its soundtrack CD in this month's LogBook. This really seemed to be one of the only things we could do which wouldn't ruin the surprise.

In the meantime, we hope you'll find some interesting bits and pieces in this month's issue. As you've already noticed, LogBook has grown again (and it's *still free*), and we're covering all kinds of things this time around, from new seasons to new shows to a review of a show that's been turned down by the TV stations in this area - quite possibly all you'll hear about it!

And stick around, for December's issue - though current plans call for it to be a bit smaller due to the seemingly universal money crunch around Christmastime - will feature our extensive review of *Star Trek: Generations*, as well as yours if you write 'em up and send them to us by Dec. 1. We also now accept letters via Fidonet netmail (see the staff box on page 4 for more information).

-EG



Above: computer generated views of the newest addition to Starfleet, USS *Voyager*.

And here's what is in this issue:

- Page 2.....Reviews & LogBook entries on *Babylon 5*'s new season
- Page 3.....*Alien Nation: Dark Horizon* reviewed; editorial - computer network-based fandom
- Page 4.....Our retrospective of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s seventh season continues
- Page 5.....Book reviews: encyclopedias on the *Trek*, *Star Wars* and *Dr. Who* universes
- Page 6.....Video reviews - Tom Baker's revengel...*Star Trek: Generations* soundtrack review
- Page 7.....New series review: Gerry Anderson's *Space Precinct*; latest news on Fox's *Dr. Who* revival
- Page 8.....Reviews of *SeaQuest: DSV*'s new season, *The Tick*, and maybe *Earth 2*?

(But wait! We have a live report coming in from Mission Control in Houston!)

LogBook Entry on the new season of *Babylon 5*.

Chrysalis Asks Tough Questions; Points Dodges Most Out Of Necessity; Revelations Picks Up Loose Ends

by Earl Green

It had to be a nightmarish event to tighten the story strings of *B5*'s first season into a noose which ensnared almost all of the main characters in a believable way, only to discover that the resulting knot would have to be loosened up to allow for the series' lead to escape. Despite series creator J. Michael Straczynski's insistence that every character has a "trap door" to fall through should anything happen to the actor in question, there's no doubt that the heartstopping cliffhanger of **Chrysalis** was put on hold so Michael O'Hare could disappear in a cloud of mystery by the following week. Still, one has to give the producers of *Babylon 5* credit for trying to make this significant defection look like just another stop in the story's winding, premeditated journey.

Chrysalis makes the separation even harder to bear with so many doors opening in Sinclair's life. On one hand, he proposes to Catherine Sakai (with Sinclair's inherent humorlessness taken into account, this has to be quite possibly the stiffest marriage proposal in human history); on the other hand, Delenn finally offers the secret of Sinclair's forgotten war experience to him. Both of these elements could have offered a chance for the character to loosen up tremendously, which probably would have made him much more popular with an audience that seemed largely indifferent to his usual formal demeanor. However, with the departure of Sinclair, any hopes that he'd become more accessible are dashed; he simply won't be back.

Chrysalis in itself, however, is a superb hour of adventure with vast and ominous implications. The reappearance of the elusive and intangibly suspicious Morden from the fantastic turning point of **Signs and Portents** earlier in the season heralds a horrifying deal with the devil made by Londo (the result of which is a fierce battle at a Narn outpost brought to life by outstanding effects, above even *B5*'s usual standard). Delenn's mysterious connection to Kosh compels her to undertake a metamorphosis whose final product still remains completely unknown at the end of **Points of Departure**. G'Kar, standing on the brink of war or peace with the Centauri, realizes that something beyond the worthiest of Narn's adversaries has taken a hand in galactic affairs. Garibaldi uncovers a conspiracy that plots to do away with Earth's alien-tolerant president, and is gunned down as he rushes to sound the alarm, another cliff we're still left hanging from at the end of **Points**.

Given the high expectations of the resolution to the outstanding **Chrysalis**, **Points of Departure** probably would have disappointed someone somewhere, no matter how good it was. The alarming number of loose ends waiting to be tied up had to wait, however, with the exodus of Michael O'Hare and the arrival of Bruce Boxleitner as Captain John Sheridan. All of the problems couldn't be solved in the same hour that we're introduced to the show's new main character, so some of them were put on a back burner for later; Delenn still hasn't hatched and Garibaldi remains in a coma at the end of **Points of Departure**, and no one seems terribly concerned about the conspiracy that killed Earth's president.

Bruce Boxleitner's Sheridan proves to be likeable, if a bit reluctant to assume his new duties. It was an excellent move to use Ivanova as our guide through this hour of new developments. Lennier, in Delenn's absence, breaks the news at last about why the Minbari withdrew from the war and what they did to Sinclair.

This is where I felt things went slightly awry. Michael O'Hare really should have been booked for one more guest appearance so this information could have been given to Sinclair before our very eyes. Sure, it's rewarding to know the answers to the series' greatest mysteries, but what we were holding out for along with just the answers was Sinclair's reaction. Being cheated out of seeing Sinclair's darkest hour revealed to him personally makes the long-awaited expose' much less satisfying.

The battle that takes up the final 1/3 of the story seems far too simply resolved. Is there a single species out there in sci-fi that doesn't revolve around honor, glory, and a bloated sense of national pride? It's getting old when nearly every alien race can be baited or repelled with oaths of what is and isn't honorable. At this rate, I can't wait for the next time the Narns slip a knife into someone's back.

Still, I can't fault *B5* for stumbling a bit en route to its sophomore year. With the nearly unthinkable task of tossing the previous lead man out via painfully lengthy exposition scenes and introducing us to a new captain, things had to be simplified so as not to cloud the issues.

23

CHRYSALISwritten by J. Michael Straczynski
directed by Janet Gieck
music by Christopher Franke

Story: Negotiations between the Narn and Centauri over territorial claims to quadrant 37 are getting nowhere, and it looks like G'Kar has the upper hand on Londo. In the meantime, a strange discussion between Kosh and Delenn leads to a momentous decision, one which numbers Delenn's days as she knows them. An informant for Garibaldi is found murdered, and Garibaldi sets out to discover who did it. Morden, an elusive being in human form who once asked Londo and G'Kar what they wanted, appears out of nowhere and offers Londo the opportunity to take credit for a solution to the quadrant 37 problem that will tip the scales in the Centauris' favor, a solution which Morden and his unspecified associates will provide at no cost. Garibaldi follows a tenuous trail of clues to a man named Devereaux, who warns that the security chief is getting into something too big for him. As it turns out, this is true - Garibaldi discovers evidence that Devereaux may be an Earthforce special agent, and finally stumbles across a plot to assassinate the president of the Earth Alliance. He pays for this discovery dearly when one of the conspirators shoots him, almost fatally. Shadows are cast upon quadrant 37, utterly annihilating every trace of the Narn presence there in mere seconds. Delenn goes to Sinclair to discuss at last the Battle of the Line and his capture, but his priority must be to find Garibaldi. Delenn is risking her life and Sinclair's to reveal the mystery to him, and warns that she has little time left. Garibaldi, dying, warns of the plot to kill the president, but his warning is too late; Earthforce One is destroyed and the vice-president is sworn in hours later. Londo is horrified at Morden's solution to the quadrant 37 dispute. Delenn sets into motion a process which begins transforming her, and Sinclair misses his chance to learn the greatest mystery of his life. Garibaldi is given 50/50 odds on surviving his injuries. And all at once, nothing is the same...

Guest Cast: Julia Nickson (Catherine Sakai), Macaulay Bruton (Garibaldi's Aide), Liz Bunnette (Lurker #1), Edward Conroy (Devereaux), Maggie Egan (News Anchor), Cheryl Francis Harrington (Senkov), Mark Handrickson (Narn Pilot), James Kiriya-Lee (Med Tech), Wesley Leong (Paramedic), Glanin Loeffler (Lurker #2), David Anthony Marshall (Stephen Petrov), Gary McGuirk (Morgan Clark), John Rieger (Guard), Marianne Robertson (Tech), Fumi Shihino (Screaming Woman), Ed Wasser (Morden), Beigen Williams (Security Guard)

24

POINTS OF DEPARTUREwritten by J. Michael Straczynski
directed by Janet Gieck
music by Christopher Franke

Story: Within three days of the president's assassination, Sinclair has been recalled to Earth. Captain John Sheridan of the starship *Ayamannon* is assigned to take command of B5, which is visited by Kalain, commander of the Minbari warship *Tregati* which has been missing since its crew defied the Grey Council's sudden cease-fire order that ended the Earth-Minbari War over a decade before. The Minbari protest the choice of Sheridan to command the station due to his service in the war, and Grey Council envoy Hedronn warns Sheridan of Kalain's presence and hostile intent. As it turns out, Kalain has made his way to Delenn's quarters to kill the cocooned ambassador, but is apprehended before he can do any harm. Lennier reveals the reason for Sinclair's recall and the end of the war. The *Tregati* emerges through the jump gate, ready to attack if Kalain is not released from custody. Sheridan, who has been described by nearly every Minbari so far as a dark omen for the hope of peace, faces the prospect of renewed bloodshed on his hands.

Guest Cast: Richard Grove (Kalain), Robin Sachs (Hedronn), Robert Foworah (General Hagus), Jennifer Anglin (Deeron), Jonathan Chapman (Ambassador #1), Joshua Cox (Tech #1), Kim Delgado (Done Tech #3), Russ Fega (Merchant

...*Babylon 5* review continued on page 3

Alien Nation: Dark Horizon reviewed

"Ahpossno's Story"

by Robert Parson

Maybe the years softened the rougher edges of a beloved show. Maybe it was expectations set too high. Whatever the case, *Alien Nation: Dark Horizon* was a bit disappointing.

Last month, I discussed how the series tackled the topics of racism and intolerance. Perhaps I should have also mentioned that at times the series used a hammer when a screwdriver would have done the job better. It was not the most subtle of programs.

Even though *Dark Horizon* was enjoyable, it was hampered by that same lack of subtlety. There were few shades of grey. The Purists were evil; human Matt Sykes and Newcomer George Francisco were good, with only hints of frailties. Only Ahpossno showed real signs of learning from his experiences.

A member of an elite military caste, Ahpossno was sent to Earth by the Tenctonese leadership to recover the missing slaves. In order to return them, though, he must help find the cure to the virus created by the Purists in the cliffhanger three years ago. After all, dead slaves serve no purpose. In addition, the humans could be taken in as domestic servants. Even though he is beginning to waver, he has his duty. Like so many soldiers before him, Ahpossno is doing what he is ordered to do, good, bad or indifferent.

Ahpossno's redemption is hampered, not by the script, but by the ham-fisted direction of executive producer Kenneth Johnson. The nuances of character are there, and Scott Patterson fleshes out those nuances as best he can, but Johnson maintains Ahpossno's stony edge until near the end of the movie.

Oddly enough, Johnson's heavy direction actually creates one of the best single scenes I've watched all year. You can really feel the panic, anxiety, fear and anger of George Francisco when he realizes that "They're coming to enslave us again."

Despite all this, *Alien Nation: Dark Horizon* was still rather enjoyable. It brought a satisfactory conclusion to the cliffhanger, and told a second compelling story. But best of all, it reunited us with some of our favorite characters from a favorite TV show, without falling into the "See, we're back!" cuteness trap.

This was a better than average sci-fi TV movie, especially when you consider the few bright spots TV sci-fi has had in the past year.

Reaction to *Dark Horizon* could spark *Alien Nation's* return, either as several made-for-TV movies, or possibly even as a regular series. The strength of *Dark Horizon* leads me to believe that whichever direction Fox takes, they can't go wrong putting Matt and George back on the beat.

EDITORIAL

We're back again just in time for the movie event of the year. So much of the plot of *Star Trek: Generations* has been aired by this time, including the legendary incident of the movie's entire script being released across national computer networks, that quite a few of you, unless you have taken great pains to consciously avoid learning any hints of the film's storyline, will probably know more or less what to expect.

But let's back up a minute here, back to this part about the script. In the *TV Guide* for the week of Oct. 8, every-*Trek* producer Rick Berman lashes out at some of the computer-based fans of *Trek* who have made a hobby of circulating rumors from the benign to the ridiculous (one of the most noteworthy examples of this being this summer's hoax about an alleged mini-series *Star Trek: Crazy Horse*, a complete fabrication from start to finish). With that, and with the magazine's labeling of the computerized factions of fandom as "the new bane of Paramount's existence," I thought it might be a good time to clarify *LogBook's* stance on rumors, rumor control, and our source information.

Where "hard facts" are concerned, such as the casting of *Voyager* and the look at *Babylon 5's* new season, a lot of this information does in fact come from the computer networks. I do get some information on *B5* from Warner Bros.' publicity department (including the nifty cover photo from last month!), but most of the straight "news" in *LogBook* comes from the computer nets.

With this in mind, I have written a letter to Paramount, regarding getting on the "mailing list" for any publicity mailers that the studio normally prepares for the mass media and affiliate stations. I don't see how they could refuse - if they don't want misinformation reaching the fans, shouldn't they take measures to distribute the correct information?

As it is, the nets are the surest bet that fanzine editors and the computer-using public have. Often, news that appears there at least has its root in truth; there are very few out-and-out tricks like *Crazy Horse*. And if Paramount and Berman won't take steps to help the "amateur press" with correct and authorized press releases, they have only themselves to blame for what crops up. If we fanzine editors have used common sense in relaying this news to you, we have done about all we can. -E.G.

#1), Bennett Guillory (Merchant #2), Catherine Hader (Young Woman), Mark Hendrickson (Ambassador #2), Kristopher Logan (Ambassador #3), Michael McKenzie (Vastor), Debra Sharkey (Tech #2), Brian Starobee (Other Pilot), Kim Strawn (Ensign), Thomas Valiante (Security Guard #2), Greg Wisnigler (Security Guard #1)

Babylon 5 review continued

Which brings us to *Revelations*, the concluding chapter of what might be termed a trilogy. Of course, with *B5's* complex continuity, there are probably few isolated handfuls of stories as such, but *Revelations* does bring to a close some of the loose ends dangling from *Chrysalis*, specifically the stories of Delenn and Garibaldi, though some of the hows and whys are still left open at the end of this installment.

The most commanding performance of *Revelations* belongs to Andreas Katsulas, whose performance has run the gamut from broad comedy to bellowing threats in the course of the first season, and now he brings new colors to G'Kar's palette: fear and awe. As he is the first to realize the nature of the emerging threat to the galaxy, G'Kar bears the weight of having to prove this to everyone else, even his own people.

Jerry Doyle finally gets off the gurney in medlab and brings Garibaldi back to life, and he's not happy when Talia scans his memory and discovers that his own right-hand man tried to kill him.

All in all, *B5* has weathered its change of command and made it seem like they meant for it to go this way all along quite well - and the larger story is certain to pick up where it left off.

25 REVELATIONS
written by J. Michael Straczynski
directed by Jim Johnston
music by Christopher Franke
Story: G'Kar narrowly escapes the Shadows he has found on a distant planet, and returns to B5 to warn the Council of his discovery. At the same time, Sheridan's sister visits him for the first time in two years and is upset that he has buried the pain of his wife's death with his devotion to duty. Dr. Franklin makes a gamble to pull Garibaldi out of his coma, but after reviving him the doctor is called away to attend to Delenn, who has emerged from the chrysalis. A Narr expedition to the Shadows' planet is wiped out within seconds of arrival, and G'Kar predicts a grim fate.
Guest Cast: Beverly Leach (Elizabeth Sheridan), Macaulay Bruton (Garibaldi's Aide), Beth Toussaint (Anna Sheridan), David L. Crowley (Lou Welch)

LOOKING BACK AT THE SEVENTH SEASON OF *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*

Taking a Gambit on Interface

by Robert Heyman

In this issue, Robert Heyman continues to look back over *Next Generation's* seventh and final year. Each issue of *LogBook* examines two more episodes under his microscope (a study which began in the October issue).

Bad: ★ Okay: ★★ Good: ★★★ Excellent: ★★★★

INTERFACE ★★

"Sometimes, stopping by is just stopping by."
- Geordi, to Data

While experimenting with a new interface device, Geordi learns that his mother and her ship, the USS *Hera*, are missing. Geordi believes her to be alive after encountering her image on a damaged starship trapped in a planet's atmosphere.

Although Geordi finally gets some much-needed backstory, any emotional impact is lost thanks to a silly and contrived B-story in which subspace aliens assume his mother's form to help rescue them from imminent death in the planet's atmosphere, serving as an inane catalyst for a final reconciliation between Geordi and his distant mother.

LeVar Burton does the best he can with a script that offers little in the way of excitement or character surprises. Why is it that nearly every regular on the *Enterprise* has an estranged parent who has communication problems with their child? First Riker and his dad, then Troi and her mom, and now Geordi and his mom. It's an old and artificial way to manufacture conflict among characters, more suited to a soap opera than a space adventure, and in this particular episode the effectiveness is nil. If you're going to say something about a character, say something new. The only redeeming qualities are an interesting interface experiment and a cameo by Ben Vereen as Geordi's father. Too bad it was wasted on this episode.

GAMBIT, PART I ★★★½

"That's my sister. She's angry. She's got a vicious temper. I wouldn't cross her."
- Riker, speaking of the incognito Beverly

In a rare action-adventure romp, the *Enterprise* crew is investigating the apparent murder of Picard when it is discovered he's posing as a smuggler aboard an alien ship in search of valuable artifacts.

It may not be your typical *Trek*-ian morality tale, but does it need to be? It's fun to see Riker dodging phaser blasts and the crew getting slapped around by greedy villains. They should have done this stuff more often. Location photography provides some much needed scope and Peter Lauritson's sophomore turn at directing is particularly effective, especially a wonderfully staged phaser fight on the planet's surface (although all that Starfleet training never included a course in how to aim your phaser).

The only weaknesses are some plastic characterization of the villains and forced conflict between Worf and Data, who assumes command of the *Enterprise* after Riker is captured. This episode nicely builds on the father/son relationship between Picard and Riker as the two try to outwit Baran, played by gruff Richard Lynch. And for those who really want to know, Sabrina LaBeauf pops up in a who-cares cameo as the Ops officer who helps Data chase down Baran's ship. It's an exciting, special effects-laden installment with a cliffhanger that could successfully pass for a season finale.

THE LOGBOOK

A non-profit fanzine published monthly by GFP Productions Ltd.

Any opinions stated in articles or other submissions in *LogBook* are those of the writer credited and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or other participants. **Submission policy** - if you submit something to the *LogBook*, we're all operating under the assumption that you don't mind seeing it go into print in these pages. If you don't want it to, please make it known! All submissions must be accompanied by your real name and home town.

We reserve the right to edit letters for improper content - remember, fans of all ages are skimming these pages. Though we encourage a lively dialogue, overly hostile replies to others' letters will not be reprinted. **Mailing Address:** Earl Green, 501 Garrison Ave., Apt. #2, Fort Smith, AR, 72901. **E-Mail address:** via FidoNet Netmail to Earl Green at 1:3822/0.

Editor/Layout: Earl Green. Contributing Writers: Robert Heyman, Robert Parson. Special thanks to our Signalmen on the Information Superhighway: Steve Prado, Joe Siegler. Printed on a Hewlett Packard DeskJet 550C with EnVision Publishing Software.

(c)1994 GFP [Glutton for Punishment] Productions, Ltd.

154 INTERFACE

written by Joe Menosky
directed by Robert Mioneo
music by Jay Chattaway

Stardate 47215.5: A new interface is being tested by Geordi to control remote unmanned probes. Utilizing his VISOR implants, Geordi is able to see, hear and experience whatever conditions the probe encounters. His interface with the probe comes in useful while the *Enterprise* investigates the loss of the starship *Raman*. But during the mission, Picard receives word that the starship *Hera*, commanded by Geordi's mother, has disappeared with all hands, and Starfleet, despite dispatching two more vessels to search, does not expect to find the *Hera* or any of her crew. Geordi is profoundly affected by the news, and when he encounters an image of his mother on the *Raman*, he goes against his father's advice and Picard's direct orders and tries to use his unique interface with the probe to find out what has happened to her.

Guest Cast: Ben Vereen (Dr. La Forge), Madge Sinclair (Capt. Silva La Forge), Warren Munson (Admiral Holt)

155 GAMBIT, PART I

teleplay by Naren Shankar
story by Christopher Hutton
and Naren Shankar
directed by Peter Lauritson
music by Jay Chattaway

Stardate 47135.2: Riker, Troi, Worf and Crusher are searching for the missing Captain Picard on Desica II to no avail. A Yridian claims he witnessed Picard's death in a seedy bar after an argument with a group of aliens, and offers to give Riker some clues in exchange for safe passage off the planet. Once aboard the *Enterprise*, the Yridian leads Riker to a planet in the Barada system, where an away team led by Riker beams down to hunt for possible leads in the investigation. A well-armed group of aliens under the command of a Romulan ambushes the away team, and Riker is captured and beamed away with the attackers. Data takes command of the *Enterprise* and pursues the alien ship. Riker finds himself in the hands of a band of mercenaries commanded by Baran, a vicious-tempered leader who maintains the loyalty of his crew - and Riker - by using pain-generating implants which he controls. Riker is astounded to find that the newest member of the rogue crew on their mysterious mission to raid ancient Romulan artifacts is a knowledgeable rogue named "Galen" - better known to Riker as Captain Picard.

Guest Cast: Richard Lynch (Baran), Robin Curtis (Tallera), Caitlin Brown (Vekor), Cameron Thor (Narik), Alan Altschuld (Yranac), Bruce Gray (Admiral Choketa), Sabrina LaBeauf (Ensign Giusti), Stephen Lee (Bartender), Derek Sandster (Lt. Sanders)

TNG & BS episode entries on pg. 2 & 4 from the *LogBook* computer files

NEXT ISSUE...we'll review *Star Trek: Generations*...more *Next Generation* seventh season episode reviews...and the first part of a critical retrospective of *Babylon 5's* first year. **LogBook #5** materializes beneath your tree in mid-December!

BOOK REVIEWS

Two Starships in Every Garage and an Encyclopedia in Every Universe

Are these huge volumes on every detail (or so they tell us) of these varied dimensions of well-established sci-fi continuity getting it right? It's all subject to the authors' interpretation - *and yours*.

by Earl Green

The *Star Trek Encyclopedia* by Michael & Denise Okuda and Debbie Mirek (Pocket Books, 1994; 396 pgs.)

Let's face it, this book could have been a lousy product and it still would have flown off the shelves; however, thanks to the diligent efforts of its authors and illustrators, the *Star Trek Encyclopedia* is a fascinating read for everyone, from casual fans to hardcore Trekmongers. One refreshing element which also made the *Star Trek Chronology* and the almost impossible-to-comprehend *Next Generation Technical Manual* readable is the authors' sense of humor, which is still in abundance here; you'll find a famous reference to the works of Douglas Adams if you look up Earth in this book. There are also lots of other humorous interludes where the authors "step out of character," such as a riotous entry on Data's cat. On the serious side, however, this book does not disappoint - the material's dead-on correct, the illustrations (particularly of starships and hardware and such) are top-notch, and the cross-references and helpful footnotes are lifesavers for true triviaholics. The problem - yes, there is a catch - is that this book, like any other *Trek* reference book that has hit the shelves since 1986, was out of date before the ink dried on the pages. Most of *Next Generation's* seventh season and *DS9's* second season are not referred to, and naturally the book will be almost hopelessly obsolete by the time *DS9's* third season, *Generations* and *Voyager* have all arrived. That may not seem like much of a fault, but then again, the *Star Trek Compendium*, the definitive overanalysis of the 1960s series which pointed out everything but "mystic numbers" in the original show, was reissued no less than four times since its original printing, each copy costing about \$12. The *Encyclopedia*, costing \$18 now (and probably more by the time enough material has accumulated to warrant the second edition), is an expensive item to "upgrade." Perhaps Pocket Books ought to let us send our "old" *Encyclopedias* in when the time comes so they can recycle the paper and send us new copies for free or, failing that, a substantial discount. The "dated" nature of the material aside, this is a wonderful piece of work!

Doctor Who: The Universal Databank by Jean-Marc Lofficier (Doctor Who/Virgin Books, 1992; 479 pgs.)

Normally setting a high standard by which sci-fi reference materials can be judged, Jean-Marc Lofficier stumbled a bit with this, a sort of encyclopedia for *Doctor Who*. His impeccable *Programme Guide* (whose format, somewhat modified, is one of the inspirations for our LogBook entries) and fascinating *Terrestrial Index* (focusing on alien visits and influences upon Earth) were both worth the cover prices; the *Universal Databank*, on the other hand, is a judgment call. Just how serious a fan are you? Surprisingly, if you're a casual fan, this book will probably serve you best. Those fans who are really "into" *Doctor Who* may be surprised to find that Lofficier dropped the ball and took off on a number of tangents in the course of writing this book. In

some of the descriptions and details of various people, places and things did not originate with the show, but rather with the author himself. Trying to fill in "gaps" in the *Who* timeline, he makes a number of assumptions and inferences, some haphazard and a few downright ridiculous. Still, it is a very comprehensive volume and leaves very few stones unturned in the *Doctor Who* mythology.

A Guide to the *Star Wars Universe* by Bill Slavicsek (Ballantine/Del Rey, 1994; 495 pgs.)

After going through this book, I'm tempted to say that there's proof of the adage "the bigger they are, the harder they fall," but I must admit to a hazardous bias with this encyclopedia of the *Star Wars* universe. One of the biggest problems with this tome of knowledge is the idiosyncratic system of alphabetizing chosen by the author. You can't look up "Skywalker, Luke" or anything of the sort; instead, you look under "L" for "Luke Skywalker." This becomes truly annoying when you have to go searching under "A" for any Imperial Admirals, since they are not listed by their last names but instead under "A" for "Admiral Piett," for example. The author claims that this was due to uncertainty about last names and first names of alien characters, but it seems that there were very few - if any - Bajoran-type cases of given name/surname reversal in *Star Wars*.

That aside, the author does score points by splitting entries down the middle to differentiate the information derived from the actual *Star Wars* movies from newer material gleaned from the West End Games books, the Timothy Zahn trilogy, *Dark Empire* comics and so on; there are even entries from the cartoon *Droids* and *Ewoks* series and the numerous Han Solo and Lando Calrissian novels of the early 80s. But perhaps, for we purists, the "not-necessarily-official" entries could have occupied the latter half of the book, completely separate from those based upon the movies. Or, more likely, the last 3/4 of the book - it seems as though most of the book's much-touted "50% new material" comes from sources other than the movies, which may be great for the gaming crowd, but often proves confusing to those of us who simply watched the movies. As I warned from the outset, I'm not into the *Star Wars* games, so I could very easily be wrong; for those who are active *Star Wars* gamers, this book may well be a godsend (or a Force-send).

As always, it's up to you to sample these books for yourself to see if they meet your discerning tastes. Perhaps because these types of publications are so very dependent upon their authors' personal interpretations of the source materials, they may be more "controversial" among fans than purely fictional works.

...Reviews continued on page 6

New series review

Space Precinct: BBC-Style Sci-Fi for the American Market?

Ted Shackleford, Rob Youngblood, and Yoda!?!? Yep, *Thunderbirds* creator Gerry Anderson is back for the '90s, if only in copyright date.

by Earl Green

You probably know Gerry Anderson's work, even if his name isn't uttered on an everyday basis around your house. Anderson may be a better known quantity in Europe and the U.K., but American audiences have seen his productions; just a few short months ago, Fox aired a badly-revamped version of the 1960s "Puppetoon" series *Thunderbirds* briefly on Saturday mornings, and others may be acquainted with *Space: 1999*, the sci-fi series of the late 70s which starred Martin Landau, Barbara Bain and Catherine Schell. If nothing else, Anderson's latest effort smacks of a combination of some of the best aspects of these two shows.

Combining the live-action of *Space: 1999* with some of the nifty animatronic puppet work which evolved from the technology used to produce *Thunderbirds*, *Space Precinct* is a new one-hour drama being offered in syndication. Starring Ted Shackleford as Brogan, a New York cop transferred to a police precinct in space, and Rob Youngblood as Haldane, the archetypal inexperienced, flirty hunk sidekick-cop, the show boasts some excellent effects. The animatronic creatures were designed by Richard Gregory, whose design work on *Doctor Who* in the early to mid 80s brought luster to that show's admittedly aging legend. The characterizations are pretty much standard-issue, including Brogan having a young, super-intelligent, smart-alec son tagging along throughout the story during an off-duty jaunt through an asteroid field and the subsequent accidental discovery of dark secrets in an abandoned derelict prototype spacecraft. Youngblood goes through his paces as a stereotypical character type as one would expect. The entire production is propelled along by a *Hill-Street-Blues*-in-the-21st-century plotline, with a healthy dose of the happy-go-lucky-cum-goofy energy which was one of the only appeals of CBS's short-lived series *Space Rangers*: imagine the camera revolving endlessly around the car-like cockpit of a little spaceship with modern-day police car lights on top as the futuristic police cruiser tumbles out of control and out of frame, and you've envisioned one of the scenes in the pilot episode!

The effects are wonderful and atypical; surprisingly, in this era of computer graphics and other such things, Anderson opted to use simple model techniques, which come across as startlingly effective and far smoother than Anderson's similar productions of the 60s and 70s. Sure, it might elicit a snicker from devotees of the far more polished effects of *Deep Space Nine* and *Babylon 5*, but those who admired the effects work in the later years of *Doctor Who* and the British sci-fi-comedy *Red Dwarf*, *Space Precinct's* visuals will prove more than adequate. The musical score is one of the real standouts of this show, some of it embarrassingly predictable, but other segments delving into appropriately grandiose John Williams pastiche. *Trek's* top brass should learn this lesson.

Some of the interesting creatures do have the drawback of being inadvertently funny, though; Jonor, assistant-head-honcho of spaceship manufacturer Humes InterSpace - "we supply every sentient race in the galaxy!" - looks like an unfortunate genetic combination of the late, great Peter

Cushing...and Yoda. Add to that a silk business suit and a toupee, and you may find yourself prone to chuckling at his every appearance.

If *Space Precinct* has a failing, it comes from two things. First, the milieu of space-travel and other sci-fi concepts is dismissed out of hand, the innovative use of future concepts in a cop show apparently lost. Very few points of the pilot episode's plot could not be substituted with a 20th century equivalent: replace the abandoned prototype spaceship with a top-secret plane, its asteroid resting place with a wooded area outside the city limits, etc. About the only innovation in this show is the character of deceased corporate mogul Humes (Bob Sherman), who has been recreated and controlled by his right-hand-man for years, programmed to behave somewhat like eccentric recluse Howard Hughes in order to avoid discovery of his holographic nature. But the character of a sentient hologram - witness *Red Dwarf* and the upcoming *Star Trek: Voyager* - is no longer an innovation in and of itself.

This dovetails with the other problem facing *Space Precinct*. The pilot paints a picture of a show that wants simply to be *Hill Street Blues* or *The Commish* with space as its setting instead of the city. The opposite will have to be true for *Space Precinct* to last so much as a single season on the air - it will have to use the technology and panoramic scope of space adventure as its backbone, not its backdrop. To do anything else, they might as well trade the police space-cruisers for a four-door panda car and bring it back down to Earth.

On the upside, the energy and enthusiasm of *Space Precinct* are enjoyably contagious, and even the father-son dynamic between Brogan and his son occasionally breaks through its persistent barrier of corniness to tug at a heart-string. The kid, on the other hand, needs major rewrites - not only is he more asinine than Wesley Crusher, Adric, Will Robinson and Boxey rolled into one horrible prepubescent gestalt entity, but he's far too omni-present in his father's work day. Even that could be forgiven at - gasp! - the sight of Brogan's functional family of the future. Rantings of family values aside, I found one of the show's most redeeming qualities to be its action - quite abundant and well-staged.

When last I checked, *Space Precinct* won't be airing in the Fort Smith area, which is sad. I think this show, with some minor modifications, stands a fair chance of surviving, and I'd like to think that future episodes may deal more with science fiction than police procedural with starry backdrops. Sadly, unless a number of people lobby the local TV stations to pick up this syndicated oddity, we'll never find out.

Return of New *Doctor Who* Delayed

Speaking of British sci-fi, Fox's *Doctor Who* revival project has met with some delays; filming has now been slated for March 1995, though a May airdate is still being announced. No casting details are available as yet.

Earth 2, Brute'? (or, "Earth 2" Destroyed by Meteor Storm, Film at 11!) by Robert Parson

We interrupt this review of *Earth 2* to bring you an important commentary *Without Warning*.

Several months ago on Comedy Central's *Politically Incorrect*, host Bill Maher brought this question to the panel: "Are we a nation of idiots?" Based on the reaction to CBS's *Without Warning*, I would have to answer "yes."

As fictional news bulletins, *Without Warning* was a depiction of meteor strikes on Earth. Despite the advisories before the movie started and following every commercial break that this was a dramatization, panicked people were calling CBS affiliates nationwide about this horrible news event. In fact, one ABC affiliate reported that they received calls from some folks wanting to know why they weren't covering the meteor strikes.

I talked with some people at KFSM TV-5 who said they also received a lot of calls from concerned viewers. So many, in fact, they ended up running additional advisories during the show.

Why are we so gullible? We are taught as children to think then act. But so many of us apparently forget this. All it would have taken would have been a couple button presses on the remote control to see if ABC, NBC, or CNN were covering the meteor strikes. Furthermore, there were some subtle hints that this was not a real event. Even with the advances in technology, it would have been virtually impossible for any network to mobilize its news department to provide full

audio and video at all locations depicted in such a short period of time. Lead anchor Sander Vanocur, playing himself, was almost too calm and collected throughout most of the crisis. Most of the coverage was too smooth for an actual breaking event.

This was a fun thriller. It was moderately scary. But a little thought on the part of viewers would have kept the worries down to a minimum.

This is the same reason the term limits movement is so strong. People are unwilling to do their homework. They would rather have responsibilities legislated away than think for themselves.

Ed. Note - yeah, so it wasn't the *Earth 2* review you expected. We thought it'd be fun in the spirit of our pre-emption of the promised *Trek* movie preview issue...oh, and yes, we will have a real live *Earth 2* review in December!

SeaQuestered

by Robert Parson

How am I supposed to teach my children to be discriminating TV viewers when obnoxiously dull programs such as *Seaquest DSV* are being palmed off as family shows? "Family oriented" does not have to mean a show is written weakly.

Last year, the stories were interesting, although they tended to be rather dull. Captain Bridger and his crew more often than not seemed to be chess pieces being pushed around by the writers. But the science was usually solid.

This year, after a promising start, *Seaquest* has fallen into an even worse malaise than in the previous year. The new producer promised a greater emphasis on the science fiction elements of the series. Even though that promise has been kept, the scripts have been muddy, confusing, and in some cases, downright incomprehensible. The tension levels are so low they are almost imperceptible. This year, I wouldn't even go so far as to call the characters chess pieces, they are more like checkers.

Hints of a dark, ugly world occasionally turn up in *Seaquest*. The environment has been damaged to the degree that oxygen must be manufactured, genetic engineering is severely restricted due to some horrible mistakes (the Daggars), there are hints of global power blackouts, tiny republics have extraordinary power. There's a wealth of material on this show to be explored. But they don't want to examine this dark world. They lean instead toward bland stories of internal United Earth Organization crises, which in all honesty were told better in the first season.

Admittedly, there have been a few nice touches during this second season. The two hour season premiere dealing with the genetically engineered life forms, or GELFs, was a fairly dramatic story of a group of people seeking equality.

Although the tactics the Daggars used were not acceptable, the story adequately dealt with their frustrations. Darwin the dolphin, who is normally handled as a talking Flipper, was featured very well in the episode that brought the return of the aliens. But a few nice touches here and there cannot bring about a solid show. It needs consistently strong writing, which *Seaquest* is not getting.

The weakness we see in *Seaquest* is quite baffling. Steven Spielberg is a co-producer and it was created by Rockne S. O'Bannon. Both of these men know what it takes to make, if not good science fiction, at least watchable science fiction.

I really want to like *Seaquest DSV*. It has a lot of dormant potential. But we really could have done without the much publicized reworking of the premise. *Seaquest* needs to be torpedoed.

Ticked Off

by Robert Parson

There's something inherently humorous about seeing superheroes belling up to the counter at a greasy spoon, drinking coffee and nonchalantly talking about the crisis of the day.

That is a common scene in the inconsistent, but often outrageously funny, cartoon *The Tick*. Based on the comic book, the adventures of the "nigh invulnerable" hero air Saturday mornings on Fox. It's quite possibly the funniest cartoon on broadcast TV, maybe even surpassing *Animaniacs*.

The Tick and his sidekick Arthur, a wannabe hero also known as (but seldomly called) the Moth, protect The City from a rash of evil-doers. The City is also overpopulated with superheroes, so many I've lost count.

The Tick is huge, blue, as dense as a neutron star, has eyes as big as picture windows and is almost as smart as a rock. Property insurance rates must have gone up in The City since the Tick came to town as he damages the rooftops while racing across town to his destination. Even simple statements are delivered by the Tick in a super-dramatic manner.

Even though I get at least one good laugh out of each week's adventure, *The Tick* hasn't had as high a laugh level as the premiere episode. In the opener, the Tick faced a group of bad guys whose masks muffled their words to the point of incomprehensibility, although they could understand each other. He also "ran out of roof" on his way to the hydroelectric power plant. The Tick puzzled over it until he hit on the brilliant idea to take a cab.

In another episode, the Tick, Arthur, and American Maid were grabbed by a steel cable. The Tick announced "I'll snap this cable!" and pumped up his muscles. But instead of the cable snapping, the other two were squished until their eyes bulged (I chuckled at that for about twenty minutes).

But you haven't lived until you've seen the Tick wrestle with a giant tongue...

Definitely worth a look, *The Tick* conveniently airs just before the nihilism of *X-Men*.