

ISSUE #14 FEBRUARY 2026

# ENGAGE!

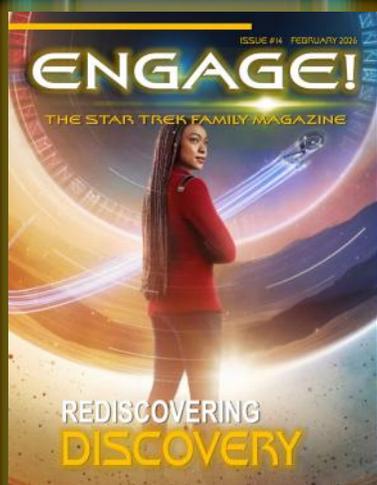
THE STAR TREK FAMILY MAGAZINE



## REDISCOVERING DISCOVERY

**PLUS:** NEW INTERVIEW WITH DOUG JONES!

## Exploring the Final Frontier as Fans



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Most Trekkies will remember the decade of no *Star Trek* on our televisions — that barren wasteland between *Star Trek: Enterprise* and *Star Trek: Discovery's* premiere. After decades of back-to-back shows, *TNG* up through *ENT*, we were left in the dark with no new adventures in the final frontier.

In late 2015, CBS announced that they were developing a new show, and the *Trek* fandom went wild. The first-look trailers promised a modern, cinematic-quality premise that was a departure from the episodic narrative, leaning more towards the serialized storytelling seen at the of *DS9*.

Early news indicated that the title of the show, and the titular ship named after it: *Discovery*. What a perfect name for a *Star Trek* television show that promised to explore new frontiers! This show, despite being set 10 years before the events of *The Original Series*, would set its sights on expanding the universe as we knew it. It wouldn't just be true to the original, it would grow the lore of *Star Trek* and set the stage for a groundbreaking return to television.

In many ways, this show wasn't just about space travel in the years before Kirk. It was an exploration of us... of humanity, in all of it's beauty, and all of its flaws. Discovering more about ourselves, of the precious nature of found family, being included and the power of friendship. These ideals are part of what it means to be human. And as Gene Roddenberry once said, *Star Trek* was "the human adventure."

Let's Fly.

— Mark Sickle  
 Founder & Host  
 Star Trek Family

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# ENGAGE!

BY THE FANS. FOR THE FANS.

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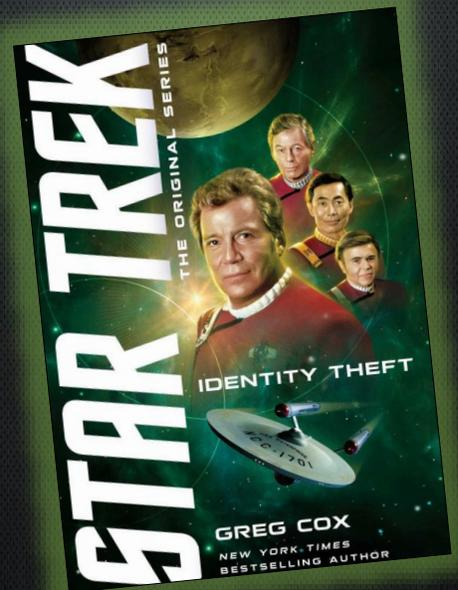


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## SUBSPACE READINGS

BOOK REVIEWS FROM THE FINAL FRONTIER





# AUTHENTICITY WITH PURPOSE

**FELICIA WATKINS-KIMBLE**

*Star Trek: Discovery* introduced us to a new way to watch the *Star Trek* world. Instead of stories through the lens of a crew, *Star Trek: Discovery* focuses on one person, Michael Burnham, and her journey. Introduced as a brilliant and skilled first officer who cares for her captain and crew, we see her overcome an evolving battle within herself, whether to be driven by logic or by emotion.

To absorb Michael Burnham and her journey, I rewatched all of *Star Trek: Discovery*. Delving into Michael Burnham's character, I looked at her with a 21st century viewer's eyes. What I saw was inspiring. She is a black woman who's brilliant, principled and compassionate. She is a problem-solver filled with hope and faith in what she believes in. Michael motivates me and others to never give up despite insurmountable odds.

Yet, to fully see Michael one needs to delve into her life before joining the USS *Shenzhou* and then the USS *Discovery*. As Barbara Walters would ask in her in-depth interviews, "Tell me about your childhood." We must look at the foundation of Michael's character: her childhood on Vulcan.

### **Vulcan childhood**

There are unhelpful descriptions of Michael's childhood: "hard," "difficult," or the succinct yet insufficient "sad." Yet it was more than this. Michael was young when she went to live with Sarek, Amanda and Spock. Rather than having the languid, stable beginnings of some of our favorite

captains, like Benjamin Sisko or Kathryn Janeway, Michael's was quite the opposite. Her parents died violently early in her life and she never got a chance for emotional stability or a sense of self. She was adopted by Spock's parents and taken to Vulcan and thrust into a world that didn't want her because she was a human.

This unwantedness hung in the air, oppressive and ever-present. She was always the "other." Looking at a historical pattern, her childhood resembled what a Black child would experience in the South during the era of Jim Crow. *Star Trek* has always examined the human condition, especially involving power, exclusion and belonging. Michael's childhood isn't merely hard or difficult; it's defined by the pain of being alone and unwanted.

Consider also Michael's self-inflicted feelings of guilt for putting others in danger. Michael believed, wrongly, that she was the cause of the death of her parents. Through her innocent request to see a star go supernova



and stay an additional three days on Vulcan, she believed that if they had moved on according to the original plan, maybe they would have lived. Bearing this guilt in mind, Vulcan logic extremists attacked the Vulcan Learning Center and nearly killed her.

Because of this, Michael believed that she was a danger to anyone who was close to her. Wanting to take some control over her life and save the people she cared about, she ran away. This was the beginning of a common cycle in her life: believing that she was the source of most problems around her, she took responsibility for everything and obsessed on finding a personal solution. In a lot of cases it wasn't necessarily the best solution, but she operated on what she felt was right.

Being a human in Vulcan was particularly difficult for Burnham. It's well known that Vulcans suppress their emotions. Through centuries of dedication to logic, Vulcans had a perfect system that suited their world. Burnham was raised being taught to suppress her human emotions of grief, fear and vulnerability. Following the tragic loss of her parents and then being othered on Vulcan, she was not afforded an outlet other than logic. She was not encouraged to express what it feels like to be alone. She had to mask her true feelings and hide her emotions.

Her masking was essential to her survival on Vulcan, and it became part of her personality into adulthood. To fit in she over-corrected her masked emotions by highlighting her brilliance. This allowed her to showcase her intel-



ligence, which she excelled at, and she graduated at the top of her class at the Vulcan Science Academy. Yet the mask stayed.

This is the Michael Burnham who joined Starfleet to find her place in the world. She appeared poised and aloof, yet deep down, she was shielding herself from any future mental or emotional harm. Her childhood taught her that safety and survival depended on controlling her environment as much as possible.

### USS Shenzhou

When we first encounter Burnham, she's the first officer aboard the USS Shenzhou under the command of Captain Phillipa Georgiou. Michael was intelligent and competent and brought logic to the forefront of her interactions. She's served for seven years, and when we first see her interactions with Captain Georgiou, Michael was told she's ready

for her own command.

Michael's strength in her intelligence and skills was also her blind spot however, and led to devastating consequences at the Battle at the Binary Stars.

Michael was fully convinced she knew the correct answer for handling the Klingons at that battle. She was so convinced of herself that she committed an unthinkable act — she mutinied against her captain. Yet this confidence crossed the line, and in one event, Michael lost the trust of her captain, mutinied against her, and put the crew at incredible risk. And in a break from *Star Trek* characters taking incredible risks and saving the day, she blundered, got her captain murdered, and started a war. For that she was court martialed and sent to prison.

### Enter USS Discovery

Because of the war and

her brilliance, she was able to re-join the effort, albeit greatly diminished, and ordered to the USS Discovery. Working with some of her old crew, Michael begins to express remorse not from the viewpoint of logic but for the first time acknowledging her feelings.

We see Michael starting to break her wall of logic and acknowledging her emotional humanness.

On Discovery, Michael begins to operate for the first time from her emotions instead of logic. This switch in roles is overwhelming for her. With the mask gone, all emotions are raw and barely filtered. With this change, she's never known how to express her emotions before. She's learning how, for the first time, to just be human.

While Discovery's crew does not warm to having a mutineer onboard, there's one person who will interact with her: Cadet



Sylvia Tilly. While initially hesitant to accept each other, they both appreciate each other's intelligence and what they provide to the ship. Also, Michael sees someone who is fully authentic and imperfectly herself, something Burnham has never done. Michael grew up with order and logic. There wouldn't be someone like Tilly on Vulcan. Michael is drawn to Tilly and eventually lets her in as a friend.

By the time Michael encounters Lieutenant Ash Tyler, she's learning that masking holds her back from true relationships. Ash openly accepted her for who she was, and he didn't care about her court-martial or her past. This is rare for Michael to be seen without the lens of her intelligence, her Vulcan past, or how useful she is. With Ash, she's just Michael.

When she and Ash lived in the Mirror Universe, her newly

found lessons were tested. Michael just began learning to let the mask stay off and not hide behind logic. Impersonating Mirror Michael Burnham felt overwhelming. Not only were Michael's personal values of empathy and compassion suppressed to survive, but also any feelings other than cruelty and violence. While it would seem easy to mask her true self, as it's something she's done her whole life, now, the Mirror Universe shows how this limited her authenticity all along. When they returned to the Prime Universe, Michael again relied on her intelligence and logic for her safety. It's what she's always done, but seemed miserable to mask at all.

### Ending the Klingon War

Michael used to be closed and self-assertive, and now she's a thriving member of the Discovery crew. While she still believed she had all the answers, she began to

also listen with her heart. By the time Admiral Cornwell is willing to do anything to defeat the Klingons, including sacrificing Starfleet principles, this is when Burnham comes full circle.

Rather than at the beginning of the war, Burnham was also willing to throw away her principles to get the job done. It's the principles that guide and give purpose, and in this case, Starfleet's principles are more important.

Her journey of balancing logic and emotions had pro-





gressed, however she still was carrying something that was still impeding her growth — her perception that she is responsible for problems around her and that she, and she alone, must resolve those problems.

In the episode “Kobayashi Maru,” the new Captain Michael Burnham and her crew are saving the miners in a damaged space station. Due to the high stakes, in Michael’s mind, this became her full responsibility. She didn’t rely on her crew. Michael had to save them, and she needed to control not only the situation but also the outcome. While most of the miners were eventually saved, it was almost at the cost of Burnham’s life.

At this point, Burnham is almost ready for leadership. But there is still a question to be re-

solved. Can she always save the day? Perhaps. Should it always be her? No.

From then on, Captain Burnham stopped relying on old messages of fear and survival and control in making leadership decisions. Her empathy changed to allow others to shine with shared responsibility and for her crew to succeed, not just her. She leads from a place of humanity first.

#### **Book — Love without Masking**

While Saru’s and Michael’s relationship is based on mutual respect and earned trust, Cleveland Booker’s relationship with Michael is based on acceptance and openness and mature love. Book is someone she doesn’t have to perform for: no high expectations or rank and hierarchy.

When Michael first meets Book, she’s been transported to

the 32<sup>nd</sup> century. While thinking she was immediately meeting up with the crew, she finds herself stranded. After crashing into Book’s ship accidentally, their initial meeting is hostile. Yet, Book listens that Michael is from the past and means him no harm. This is huge for Michael as Book is someone who believes her without having to justify her reasons or convince and strong arm an agreement. This initial foundation of trust is what leads them to partnership.

For a year, Book and Burnham partnered on and off as couriers while Burnham is eagerly awaiting for Discovery to come through the wormhole. This year of waiting for Discovery, Michael’s world has changed. The Federation nearly collapsed, smaller due to The Burn. Far-flung from any-



thing remotely familiar, she needed to find her own identity. What she develops, she's had all along: using her intelligence to get out of tough situations and willingness to bend the rules. There isn't Starfleet or her Vulcan upbringing to curb her actions. When Michael realizes she's not bound to any of this, she's literally free.

The one thing that does stay is survival because Burnham is alone, even with her partnership with Book. Her empathy that usually stems from this survival is deadly. Empathy in an unknown world makes you a target and naive. She decided to survive and mask for safety but not because of a lapse in growth.

Michael's relationship with Book develops because, overall, the masking is gone. He's seen her at her worst, at her best, at her bravest, at her most scared moment of realizing she's truly alone. And in all of that he accepts her and trusts her. Because he accepts her, she begins to accept herself and trust in Book.

It's rare for Burnham to put her trust in a singular person, where in Starfleet, it's always in a group setting and chains of com-

mand. But in extenuating circumstances the only thing — when it's with the right person — is to trust. Book and Michael's partnership was needed where trust was implicit and necessary for survival. She's trusting without sacrificing who she is. Book knows she's brilliant, but that's not the reason why he cares for her. Michael is with someone who sees her.

When Michael finally joins again with Discovery, they notice the changes in her. She's more assured and measured in the way Saru taught her, but not from a space of fear and it's not based on her intelligence or survival. Michael comes from a centered place. Yet with Discovery, it's a reminder of her past.

Which is why when the Dark Matter Anomaly (DMA) destroyed Book's home world, Kewijan, Michael and Book's relationship was severely tested.

Book's grief is immediate and consuming. Faced with unimaginable loss, he is willing to embrace any solution that promises justice, even if it comes at the cost of his relationship with Michael.

Michael, now reconnected with Starfleet and in a leadership

role, cannot follow his calls for justice, even though she understands them. She looks at the situation from the larger view of responsibility to the Federation. Careful consideration is necessary, but Book cannot hear this. He wants action, and he wants it now.

A Michael Burnham, before entering the 32<sup>nd</sup> century, might have agreed with Book. Yet she's learned how to think beyond herself and her deep-seated need to survive and save everyone. She cannot abandon the values that now anchor her, even for the man she loves.

What Michael learned from this was when she trusted her instincts, she still relied on the old systems that she had to be the one to save Book. She didn't consider someone else stepping in. To Michael, this was a winnable scenario because she knew Book. Yet, because of their relationship together, they built mutual trust and respect over time. But now, it's broken. Book didn't trust that Michael would make the best decision. This hurt because more than anything Burnham was making the best decisions for her crew, for the Federation and the outer worlds, and Book.

After the incident with almost destroying the DMA, Michael and Book's trust is now fractured. Book went behind Burnham's back. Previous situations, Burnham would go back to masking herself. Would she go back to survival first? No, she didn't. Even with Book having to pay for the consequences of his crimes and their goodbye, Burnham remained open as she learned that love is

complicated.

When Michael and Book reunite in the fifth season, their love is no longer shaped by survival or shared past. It's now shaped by uncomfortable truths. Too much has happened with their relationship because of the DMA and Book's actions. The rupture between them forced both to confront who they are separately and as a couple.

Book returns to Discovery remorseful. His work in rehousing displaced families from the DMA continues to hold his previous actions accountable. Michael is settled into her captaincy and her role in Federation leadership. While she is kind to Book, she knows she doesn't need to rescue him, not from his guilt or his actions. She's finally learned the boundaries of her responsibility to herself, to her crew, to the mission, and to Book. She also learned what was not her responsibility, which in this case was Book's personal agenda. Their reunion is strictly business, not sure how to acknowledge each other or their broken relationship.

Michael continues her path of growth and at first tries to be the one that bridges the awkwardness. Yet it's clear she and Book are not on the same page anymore. By the end of the episode "Red Directive," she learns she doesn't have to be the one to bring the relationship to restoration. Love, when there's broken trust, doesn't mean she's the one to save everything. She's able to come to these realizations clear-eyed and with compassionate intention for both of them.

As they continue the mis-

sion, it's clear they still care. There isn't a resolution, but Michael is secure in herself and in her leadership. Book sees this and wants to live up to Michael's expectations because she deserves it, not that she's demanded it.

By the end of the mission, not only do they still care, but are willing to work on the relationship. It's a quiet reconnect, without pushing or compromising or excusing the reasons for the split. It affirms for Michael a true cycle of growth that love without masking requires accountability from both partners and trust is rebuilt slowly. A broken relationship does not instantly kick in survival or rescuing either. It's knowing there are some situations you can't control and that's OK. Learning all of this, Michael is fully herself again, fully present, fully human.

### Why Michael Burnham Matters

*"And I believe that being a Black woman at the helm of this franchise is very important for people to see. Because it's one thing to see representation, but it's not enough. The representation needs to be full of potential. And I love that I get to be this woman, Michael Burnham, who is genius, competent, sacrificial; a woman who leads with integrity, heart and grace." – Sonequa Martin-Green*

I spent a lot of time with Michael Burnham and the crew of Discovery. It's allowed me to fully see her. Her journey and conclusion was not neat and tied in a bow. It's unlearning the language of trauma and survival, and the lessons are slow and uncomfortable.

I can't help but relate to Michael as a Black woman. Her 23<sup>rd</sup> century struggles are familiar to me. Many Black women carry the Superwoman Syndrome. Dr. Cheryl L. Woods-Giscombe identified this and there are five behaviors that Black female leaders possess: show strength, suppress emotions, resist being vulnerable, succeed with limited resources, and be obligated to help others. How many times in the series did we see Michael do exactly this?

What makes Michael's arc so refreshing and hopeful is she does unlearn this Superwoman Syndrome and releases them to become a more secure version of herself. Michael releases what she cannot control, which is huge for her character. She learns healthy boundaries for herself and as a leader. She shows emotion and invites vulnerability, while continuing to be brilliant and has compassion for herself. It gives me hope that this change is possible for others. This change is possible for me.

While change can be hard, when done with intention, it's meaningful and long-lasting. Michael arrived at a place where she can lead, love, and just be her authentic self which is revolutionary.

This is not a small thing.



**FELICIA WATKINS KIMBLE:** Felicia Kimble is a wife and mom of three, and works for an environmental nonprofit in her Ready Room at home. An avid *Trek* fan, she's a crew member of the USS Monocacy, part of *Star Trek: The Fleet*.

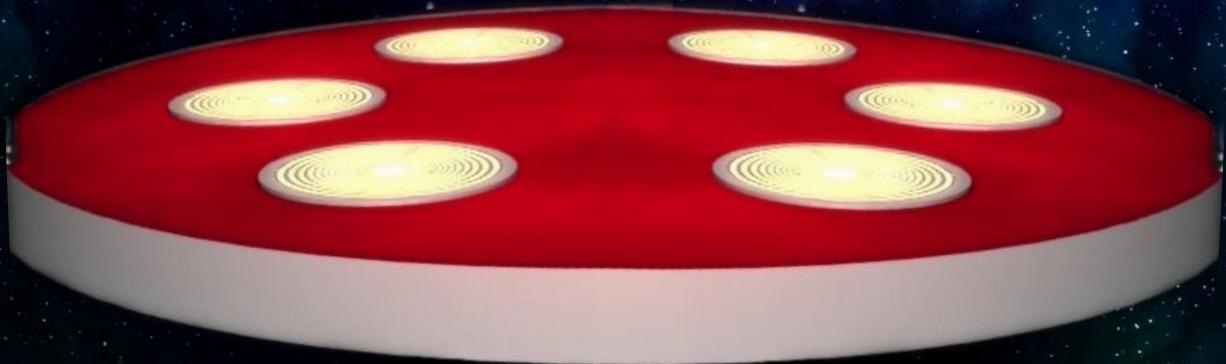


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# HOW DISCOVERY REINVIGORATED *STAR TREK*



JAMEY WYLIE

**A**s a 60-year-old entertainment juggernaut, *Star Trek* has had a lot of spinoffs and incarnations in order to bring new content to fans in ways that are fresh and relevant. Each incarnation transformed *Star Trek* and brought something vital to the franchise.

*The Animated Series* (TAS) was the first successful attempt to bring new *Trek* content back to television after *The Original Series'* cancellation in '69. TAS demonstrated that *Star Trek* can work in any medium, whether animation or live action.

*The Motion Picture* (TMP) elevated *Trek* to the big screen and began a new era of movies.

*The Next Generation* (TNG) proved that *Star Trek* is not just about the original cast and the original era but that the Final Frontier was limitless.

*Deep Space Nine* (DS9) helped increase representation and moved *Trek* away from episodic storytelling.

The three J.J. Abrams-produced *Trek* reboot films brought a fresh new look and a renewed interest in a property that had lain dormant since the cancellation of *Enterprise*.

When *Discovery* premiered in 2017, it forever changed the landscape of the franchise. *Discovery* brought the shared universe back to the small screen after a dozen years, gave *Trek* the highest possible production values and true representation, and paved the way for the expansion of the *Star Trek* universe.

This article is a celebration of those positive contributions that *Discovery* has made to *Star Trek*.



### Opinions About *Discovery*

Before this article expands upon the contributions of *Discovery*, something must be said about how very divisive *Discovery* is among fans. There are simply a lot of people who dislike the show and are very vocal about it, and that is OK. People are allowed to like what they like or dislike what they do not like.

Some fans did not appreciate how *Discovery* handled continuity, the overt emotionalism of the show, or other details of the plot, characterization or tone. We must be honest and admit that no incarnation of *Star Trek* had a perfect track record. Every single series had bad episodes, plot holes and inconsistencies with the ethos of *Star Trek*.

I think *Discovery* is divisive because, as flawed human beings, we often focus on differences rather than similarities. We love a 60-year-old franchise, but we need to understand that times change and the art of storytelling evolves, so every new incarnation of *Star Trek* will be different. Didn't Gene Roddenberry encourage us to embrace difference?

My personal motto is, "Be a fountain, not a drain!" As a fan, I strive to be a source of positive energy, and I try my best to avoid sucking the joy out of things for myself or others simply because something hasn't met my expectations. To be candid, there are a lot of things that I don't like about *Discovery*, yet it never hindered my enjoyment and appreciation of what is an attempt to bring back a franchise that I love. I learned to focus on what I liked about the show and simply ignored the rest.

### Anticipating A New *Trek* Series

I remember the excitement of the months leading up to the premiere of *Discovery* on Sept. 24, 2017. It would be the first new *Star Trek* series on the small screen for over a dozen years! *Enterprise* had ended in May of 2005, and its cancellation had left a serious void in *Star Trek* content. There had literally been a *Star Trek* show in constant production for 19 solid years from 1986 through 2005. If you were like me, you had become used to a regular diet of new content on the small and big screens and missed it when it was gone.



In the interim, we had the J.J. Abrams-produced reboots and some fan films like “Star Trek: Continues,” but they were only an appetizer when we were used to a buffet (got to love food metaphors). With the advent of *Discovery* we were getting a recurring, ongoing series to look forward to! Not only was it exciting for diehard fans but CBS really promoted the show and made it the lynchpin of its new streaming service. These promotional efforts made it the highlight of San Diego Comic Con in 2017 and it created a lot of positive buzz for the franchise. It had been a long time since *Star Trek* had created this much excitement, which is normally reserved for “Star Wars” or Marvel movies.

The pre-release hype was a success for CBS and drove subscriptions to CBS: All Access (now called Paramount+). The show debuted with millions of views and was a hit by most metrics. *Star Trek* was back!

### Higher Budget, Higher Production Values

Prior to *Discovery*, the last show on the small screen, *Enterprise*, was obviously produced on a lower budget and suffered from lack of studio support. This resulted in less-than-stellar visuals, special effects and sets. Computer effects were also much cruder at the time, and did not serve the show well.

When *Discovery* premiered, I was blown away by its production values. The design, special effects and cinematography were all amazing and visually stunning. Each episode of *Discovery* was truly movie quality. I loved the look of the show with its gorgeous sets, updated costumes and new starship designs (the USS *Shenzhou* is beyond cool).

I loved how they delved into the deep lore of *Trek* and took a design of the *Enterprise* from Ralph McQuarrie’s sketches for the 1975 production of “Star Trek: Planet of the Titans.” That

design was used as the basis for the USS *Discovery* and was fleshed out by veteran *Star Trek* designer John Eaves. All of this was so exciting because *Star Trek* was finally receiving the studio investment and production values that it deserved.

### Find Out More

If you like concept art and behind-the-scenes info, then I highly recommend the following resources for learning more about the development and production of *Discovery*:

“Star Trek: *Discovery* the Official Collector’s Edition” by Titan Books — this beautiful hardcover has concept art, articles and photos from Season 1.

“Star Trek: *Discovery* Guide to Seasons 1 and 2” by Titan Books — this softcover is a treasure trove of articles, interviews and photos from the series.

“Star Trek: Designing Starships - *Discovery* Season 1” by Ben Robinson and Hero Collector —



This hardcover is part of Eaglemoss' Starship Collection reference set. It is filled with beautiful concept art and interviews with the designers of the starships

from *Discovery*. As a starship nerd, I can't get enough of this series.

**New Series, New Designs; Same *Trek* Ideals**

Like a lot of new incarnations, not everything appealed to me when it came to the design choices of the new *Trek* series. I must admit that I really struggled with the new aesthetic of the Klingons, (just like the fans did in 1979 when the Klingons got forehead ridges and an updated look in *The Motion Picture*) but it did not hinder my enjoyment of the show. However, by the end of Season 2, the look of the Klingons had evolved into a more recognizable visage.

*Star Trek*, since its inception, celebrated diversity and inclusion and prided itself on a lot of firsts in testing societal expectations. Sonequa Martin-Green, who played the lead role in *Discovery*, was quoted as saying

"*Star Trek's* legacy is one of diversity and inclusivity. I love that we are taking the next step forward in that legacy, and therefore staying true to it."

When it comes to representation, diversity and inclusion, *Discovery* didn't just stay true to *Star Trek*, it set the bar and pushed the envelope further than any series before it. It proudly showed that the future belonged to everyone. A future where gender, race, beliefs and sexual orientation were no longer a barrier was finally fully realized on screen via *Discovery*.

In today's political climate, it is especially crucial that we honor *Star Trek's* culture of inclusivity and celebrate the series that advanced that ideal the most.

**Paving The Way For Many More *Trek* Series**

The early success of *Discovery* paved the way for the expansion of the franchise and the



*Star Trek* universe itself. In an interview with TrekMovie.com, Alex Kurtzman, the executive producer of *Discovery* and the man currently tasked by Paramount with guiding all things *Star Trek* on the small screen, stated, "There would be no modern age of *Star Trek* without *Discovery*. Whether you loved it or you hated it, it kicked open the door for more *Star Trek*... I didn't set out to build the *Star Trek* Universe when we did

*Discovery*, but that is, in fact, what happened."

Think about the chain of causality that allowed for all of the recent shows that we have been gifted with. *Discovery* led to *Short Treks*, which introduced the attack on Mars from *Picard*.

The increased demand for more *Trek* content and the mass popularity of animated shows like "Rick and Morty" led to *Lower Decks*. *Discovery* Season 2 intro-

duced Anson Mount as Capt. Christopher Pike, and his portrayal was so popular that fans demanded a show of his own as captain of the Enterprise. From that demand created by *Discovery*, we are now on season 3 of *Strange New Worlds* and are anticipating two more seasons. And with the ending of *Discovery* and *Lower Decks*, we now have *Starfleet Academy*.

### Expanding *Trek* Universe

Not only did *Discovery's* early success lead to more content on the small screen but it expanded the *Trek* universe as a whole. It helped to bring back to life a lot of legacy characters and added to their mythos.

Think about how well-served the character of Capt. Pike was in Season 2 of *Discovery*, and how he was fleshed out beyond what we saw in *The Original Series*. He became a character people cared about and wanted to see more of. It also gave us so many new and interesting charac-





ters to love: Saru, Captain Lorca, Sylvia Tilly, Jett Reno, Cleveland “Book” Booker, to name some of my favorites.

Season 3 of the series opened up an entire new corner of the *Star Trek* universe (the 32nd Century) for new and interesting stories to be told in. I found the 32nd century very interesting and really liked the concept of the collapse of the Federation and The Burn.

**Ensemble-driven Versus Lead Character-Focused Storytelling**

*Discovery* also gave us a new focused way of telling *Star Trek* stories.

*Star Trek* has always been an ensemble show (the ship and crew), but *Discovery* made the choice to explore the character arc of a single person (Michael Burnham).

This choice makes total sense in today’s format of concise storytelling and abbreviated seasons.

**Discovery Tie-Ins And Extras Abound**

*Discovery* also expanded the franchise beyond the show itself by launching a wealth of outstanding tie-in material. Reference books, novels and comics were all media produced because of the opportunity that *Discovery*

provided. Many of these titles are absolutely phenomenal.

As mentioned earlier, there are lots of excellent, high-quality reference books that feature amazing art and interviews with the creatives behind the show.

IDW Comics has also partnered with Paramount to create lots of new content. I am a huge fan of *Star Trek* comics, and one of my absolute favorite miniseries is “Star Trek: Discovery - The Light of Kahless” by Kirsten Beyer and Mike Johnson, which I reviewed in this very issue of “Engage! The Star Trek Family Magazine.” Check out that review to see why “The Light of Kahless” is such a great example of *Star Trek* comics.

There are also a lot of novel tie-ins that are worth reading. I highly recommend “Star Trek: Discovery - Drastic Measures” by Dayton Ward.

*Discovery* has truly gifted us with lots of fantastic content off the small screen.

**Discovery Achieved Goal Of Revitalizing Star Trek**

Despite any criticism that can be leveled at *Discovery*, an honest fan must admit that it revitalized the franchise.

It reminded us of the cultural legacy of *Trek* and the importance of striving for an inclusive future today. The series breathed new life into iconic characters such as Capt. Pike and Harry Mudd. It added significantly to the mythos of *The Original Series*. However, it also moved beyond the confines of what had come before.

*Discovery* created the con-

ditions to usher in a golden era of new *Trek* on and off the screen. As Kurtzman said, “...it kicked open the door for more *Trek*...”

The franchise had been in limbo since the end of *Enterprise*, and the launch of *Discovery* showed that *Trek* was not dead and was capable of growth. New characters, new media, new vistas of the Final Frontier were born and blossomed because of the early success of this series.

As a lifelong Trekkie, I am thankful that *Star Trek: Discovery* kicked open that door.



**JAMEY L. WYLIE:** Jamey is a lifelong lover of all things *Trek*, especially the media of novels and comics. He is currently a professional school counselor and bi-vocational pastor. Jamey is married to Amanda, who enables his nerdiness.

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# CHARTING A NEW FINAL FRONTIER





**MARK SICKLE**

## How *Star Trek: Discovery* Honors Tradition and Redefines the Final Frontier

Since its premiere, *Star Trek: Discovery* has been both a love letter to Gene Roddenberry's groundbreaking vision and a bold leap into uncharted storytelling territory. More than just a prequel or a reboot, *Discovery* stands as a testament to *Star Trek's* enduring capacity for reinvention, meticulously balancing reverence for its legacy with a hunger for innovation. This feature examines in detail how *Discovery* honors the franchise's past while forging its own path, offering vivid examples of homage and creative expansion.

### Part I: Building on the Past

#### Embracing the Past — Visually and Thematically

From its very first moments, *Star Trek: Discovery* signals its deep respect for the legacy it inherits. The series opens with a familiar flourish — a styl-

ized Starfleet delta set against the infinite black of space, accompanied by a sweeping musical score that echoes Alexander Courage's classic theme. This opening is more than mere fan service; it's a promise that *Discovery* understands the power of *Star Trek's* iconic imagery and intends to honor it. Throughout the series, audiences are treated to careful recreations and modernizations of the franchise's most recognizable sights and sounds. The *whoosh* of automatic doors, the familiar beeps and chirps of bridge consoles, and even the gentle hum of a starship at warp all serve as sensory bridges to *Trek's* original universe.

The visual design of *Discovery* is a masterclass in balancing new and old. Production designer Tamara Deverell and her team crafted sets that pay homage to *The Original Series* while updating them for a high-definition era. The corridors of the USS *Discovery* are wider and sleeker, but the color palette and lighting often invoke

the retro-futuristic feel of the 1960s. The bridge, with its circular layout, nods to the design of the classic *Enterprise*, while incorporating holographic displays and touch interfaces that feel cutting-edge, but not out of place. Even the transporter effect — brilliant streaks of light assembling and dissolving away crew members — is a loving update of the original shimmering visual.

Uniforms, too, reflect this blend of continuity and innovation. *Discovery's* early seasons feature deep blue Starfleet uniforms with division-colored piping — a visual evolution from the monochrome jumpsuits seen in *Star Trek: Enterprise* and a respectful forerunner to the red, gold and blue tunics of *The Original Series*. In the second season, when the crew encounters the USS *Enterprise*, viewers are treated to modernized versions of those classic uniforms, striking a perfect balance between nostalgia and plausibility within the show's timeline. But *Discovery's* homage goes beyond visuals. The show actively engages with the philosophical and thematic underpinnings of *Star Trek*. From the outset, it grapples with the fundamental questions that have defined the franchise for decades: What does it mean to be a Starfleet officer? How do we weigh personal loyalty against the greater good? What are the ethical boundaries of exploring — or interfering with — new worlds?

*Discovery's* writers intentionally revisit foundational *Star Trek* themes. The concept of "infinite diversity in infinite combinations" — first introduced in *The*





*Original Series* as a Vulcan philosophy — finds new resonance in *Discovery's* diverse cast and the variety of cultures and perspectives aboard the ship. The show's very premise, focusing on a science officer (Michael Burnham) who was raised by Vulcans, allows it to explore the tension between logic and emotion — a central theme of the Spock character and a cornerstone of *The Original Series'* storytelling.

Classic *Trek* moral dilemmas are not just referenced; they are actively interrogated and updated for a modern audience. In the pilot episode, "The Vulcan Hello," Burnham's struggle to decide between following Starfleet protocol and acting on her Vulcan upbringing's more pragmatic logic mirrors the kinds of difficult decisions faced by Capt. James Kirk and his crew. Later episodes, such as "Lethe" and "Context Is for Kings," delve into the conse-

quences of those choices, highlighting the ongoing importance of *Star Trek's* signature blend of idealism and realism.

*Discovery* also reintroduces the concept of the Prime Directive — here called General Order One — by placing the crew in situations where the imperative to avoid cultural contamination is at odds with their desire to do good. These moments call back to classic episodes like "The Apple" and "A Private Little War," but with a 21st-century sensibility regarding cultural imperialism and ethical intervention.

The series pays homage to the franchise through its devotion to *Star Trek's* spirit of exploration. Each season is structured around a mystery or quest that demands scientific curiosity and moral courage. Whether it's deciphering the mysterious signals of the Red Angel, unraveling the cause of The Burn, or searching for the lost

Federation, *Discovery's* narrative arcs evoke the thrill of charting the unknown that made *The Original Series* so compelling.

Finally, *Discovery's* respect for its roots is evident in its casting and characterization. The inclusion of legacy characters — most notably Sarek, Amanda Grayson, Spock and Capt. Christopher Pike — creates a living bridge to *Star Trek's* past. These characters are not static icons, but dynamic figures whose decisions and growth reflect the evolving values of both their fictional universe and the real world.

In sum, *Star Trek: Discovery* does not merely reference the original *Star Trek*; it engages with it on every level, from aesthetic choices to philosophical debates. By carefully weaving past and present, *Discovery* ensures that the franchise's foundational ideals endure, even as it boldly moves forward.



S1 E1 — “A Vulcan Hello”

### Familiar Faces, Ships and Species

Perhaps the most direct homages come in the forms of character and ship design. The return of the USS Enterprise — reimagined with dazzling modern effects but unmistakably echoing Matt Jefferies’ iconic blueprints — elicited cheers from fans when it first appeared in the Season 1 finale, “Will You Take My Hand?” The bridge, with its retro color palette and tactile switches, is a clear love letter to *The Original Series*’ production values, reinterpreted for a contemporary audience.

*Discovery* doesn’t stop at ships. Fan-favorite characters make triumphant returns. Captain Pike (Anson Mount), originally played by Jeffrey Hunter and later by Sean Kenney, is given new life and depth, quickly becoming a standout figure in Season 2. Pike’s leadership — ethical, courageous

and deeply empathetic — mirrors the aspirational qualities of the franchise’s best captains. Similarly, Spock (Ethan Peck), one of science fiction’s most beloved characters, is skillfully reintroduced. The portrayal captures the internal conflicts that would come to define Spock, offering viewers an origin story that feels both faithful and fresh.

Species, too, are celebrated and reimagined. The Vulcans, Klingons, Andorians and Tellarites all make appearances, their cultures explored with new layers of complexity. The Klingons, in particular, receive an extensive visual and linguistic overhaul, sparking both debate and admiration among fans. Their storyline in Season 1, centered on the tensions of war and identity, is a direct echo of *The Original Series*’ Cold War allegories, updated for a post-9/11 world.

### Revisiting Classic Dilemmas

*Star Trek*’s legacy is built upon more than just starships and strange new worlds — it is anchored in its exploration of timeless ethical dilemmas and the human condition. *Star Trek: Discovery* continues this tradition, but does so with a modern sensibility, ensuring that classic *Trek* quandaries are not only acknowledged but meaningfully reexamined in light of contemporary issues and character arcs.

From its pilot episode, *Discovery* thrusts its protagonist, Michael Burnham, into a crucible of moral uncertainty. In “The Vulcan Hello,” Burnham faces the impossible decision of whether to fire upon the Klingons preemptively to prevent a war — a direct echo of the “needs of the many” versus “the needs of the few” logic made famous by Spock. Her choice to mutiny, motivated by a



S2 E8 — “If Memory Serves”

desire to save her crew and the Federation, leads to personal disgrace and sets the series' tone: In *Discovery*, the right choice is often ambiguous and fraught with consequence.

The series continually returns to the Prime Directive — here called “General Order One” — as a philosophical and practical challenge. In “New Eden” (Season 2), the crew discovers a human colony on a distant planet, descended from Earthlings transported there centuries earlier. The dilemma: Should they intervene to save the colony from disaster, potentially disrupting their natural development, or uphold Starfleet's principle of non-interference? The episode mirrors classic *TOS* stories like “The Return of the Archons” and “A Private Little War,” but *Discovery* deepens the debate, allowing its characters to voice the emotional

and ethical weight of their decisions in a world that is less clear-cut than the utopias of earlier *Trek*.

*Discovery* also explores the tension between following orders and following conscience — another classic *Trek* motif. Burnham, Saru and other crew members frequently confront situations where Starfleet's rules are at odds with their own moral compasses. Whether it's Saru's struggle to reconcile his Kelpien instincts with Starfleet's expectations, or Stamets' battle between scientific exploration and the ethical implications of the spore drive, these conflicts are rendered with nuance and complexity.

The show does not shy away from the ramifications of those choices, either. In the aftermath of Burnham's mutiny, the crew must grapple with issues of trust, redemption and for-

giveness, reflecting on how leadership and loyalty are tested in times of crisis. The Mirror Universe arc further complicates morality, exposing characters to versions of themselves who have made darker choices and forcing them to confront the costs — and necessity — of their own ethical boundaries.

*Discovery's* willingness to revisit and reframe these classic dilemmas, often through the lens of its diverse cast and evolving social context, ensures that the spirit of *Star Trek's* philosophical inquiry continues to thrive. The show's characters don't just quote the Prime Directive or debate utilitarian ethics — they live them, struggle with them, and, in doing so, invite a new generation of viewers to consider the ever-relevant question at the heart of *Star Trek*: What kind of future are we building, and at what cost?

## Tribute Episodes and Thematic Continuity

Some of *Discovery's* most memorable moments arrive in episodes that serve as direct tributes to *Star Trek's* storied past, blending nostalgia with fresh perspectives. These episodes don't simply reference classic *Trek*, they actively engage with it, expanding on foundational stories and themes while inviting both long-time fans and new viewers to share in the sense of legacy.

A standout example is Season 2's "If Memory Serves." This episode is a heartfelt homage to *The Original Series'* first pilot, "The Cage," and the acclaimed two-parter "The Menagerie." *Discovery's* creative team went so far as to open the episode with a montage of footage from "The Cage," seamlessly transitioning into their own narrative. The episode sees Michael Burnham and Spock returning to Talos IV, where they encounter the telepathic Talosians and revisit key moments from Spock's past. *Discovery* painstakingly recreates iconic visuals: the haunting alien flora, the

musical blue singing plants and the Talosians' distinctive appearance — all updated with modern effects but unmistakably true to the 1960s design. This episode doesn't just tip its hat to the past; it enriches the lore, revealing new facets of Spock's emotional journey and exploring the consequences of choices made decades earlier in *Trek's* timeline.

The series also pays tribute through character-driven stories that echo the franchise's core themes. The appearance and development of Capt. Pike and the inclusion of Number One and Spock on the Enterprise bridge are themselves tributes to *The Original Series'* spirit of exploration and ethical leadership. In "Through the Valley of Shadows," Pike is confronted with a vision of his tragic future — a fate previously revealed in "The Menagerie." *Discovery* handles this with both respect and poignancy, reinforcing the franchise's belief in the value of sacrifice and the nobility of service, even in the face of personal cost.

*Discovery's* thematic conti-

nunity is further maintained through its ongoing commitment to the ideals that have defined *Star Trek* for generations. The show continually returns to the importance of diplomacy over violence, the value of scientific inquiry, and the pursuit of understanding across differences. Diplomacy, for example, is a recurring solution to conflict, whether in tense negotiations with the Klingons, delicate first contact scenarios or efforts to reunite the fractured Federation in the far future.

The series also weaves in the enduring optimism that has always set *Star Trek* apart. Even as *Discovery* explores darker themes — war, trauma and the fragmentation of the Federation — it never loses sight of hope. Each season is ultimately about building bridges: between people, between cultures and between past and future. This thematic thread, running through both the tribute episodes and the broader narrative, ensures that *Discovery* not only honors classic *Trek* but also carries forward its mission — to explore, to understand, and to unite.

In these ways, *Discovery's* tribute episodes and ongoing thematic continuity serve as both a celebration of *Star Trek's* history and a reaffirmation of its relevance, ensuring that the franchise's core values continue to inspire and resonate.

## Part II: Building Upon the Franchise

### Evolving the Narrative Structure

One of the boldest ways *Star Trek: Discovery* distinguishes





itself from its predecessors is through its commitment to serialized storytelling. While previous *Star Trek* series — especially *TOS* and *The Next Generation* — relied primarily on episodic, self-contained adventures, *Discovery* embraces season-long arcs that allow for deeper, more nuanced character development and complex, interwoven plots. This shift marks a significant evolution in the franchise's narrative style, reflecting broader trends in contemporary television storytelling.

From the outset, *Discovery's* writers signal their intent to tell an ongoing story. The first season is built around the outbreak and resolution of the Federation-Klingon War, with each episode serving as a chapter in a larger, cohesive narrative. Rather than hitting the reset button at the end of every episode, *Discovery's* characters must grapple with the consequences of their actions over time. The scars of war, the burden of past decisions and the need for

reconciliation are recurring threads that shape the entire season and the development of its lead, Michael Burnham.

This serialized approach allows for sophisticated long-term character arcs. Michael Burnham's journey is a prime example: She begins as a disgraced mutineer bearing the weight of responsibility for the war, and over multiple seasons, works to rebuild trust, find redemption, and ultimately rise to the rank of captain. Her relationships — with Saru, Sarek, Ash Tyler and her surrogate brother Spock — are allowed to evolve organically, with emotional beats that resonate across episodes and even seasons. Rather than reverting to the status quo, *Discovery's* characters change, grow, and carry the impact of past experiences with them, lending the series a sense of emotional realism and continuity.

Other characters, too, benefit from this narrative structure. Saru's transformation from an

anxious Kelpien defined by fear to a courageous, wise leader is explored in depth over several seasons, including the groundbreaking storyline where he returns to his homeworld and helps liberate his people from millennia of oppression. Paul Stamets and Hugh Culber's relationship is not confined to single "issue episodes;" instead, their bond, struggles and growth are depicted with the complexity and authenticity rarely seen in earlier television, *Trek* or otherwise.

The serialized format also enables *Discovery* to weave intricate mysteries and high-stakes arcs that stretch across entire seasons. The Red Angel mystery in Season 2, the galactic calamity known as The Burn in Season 3 and the enigmatic threat of Species 10-C in Season 4 unfold over time, encouraging sustained viewer engagement and allowing the show to explore the wider ramifications of each crisis. This approach rewards dedicated fans



with layered storytelling, subtle foreshadowing and meaningful payoffs for long-running plot threads.

Importantly, while *Discovery* tells big, season-long stories, it still finds space for intimate, character-driven moments and standalone adventures. Episodes like “New Eden” and “Calypso” (the latter a *Short Trek*) demonstrate the show’s ability to

balance serialization with the franchise’s tradition of exploring new worlds, examining philosophical dilemmas, and spotlighting individual crew members. These episodes provide breathing room within the larger narrative, ensuring that *Discovery* remains true to *Star Trek*’s roots even as it innovates.

By adopting and mastering serialized storytelling, *Discovery*

positions itself as a *Star Trek* for the modern era — one that recognizes the audience’s appetite for complex, ongoing stories and emotionally resonant character development. This evolution not only breathes new life into the franchise but also paves the way for future series, such as *Star Trek: Picard* and *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*, to experiment with their own narrative forms. In doing so, *Discovery* ensures that *Star Trek* remains as dynamic, compelling and forward-thinking as ever.

### Tackling Modern Social Allegories

Staying true to *Star Trek*’s tradition of using science fiction as a mirror for real-world issues, *Star Trek: Discovery* boldly tackles contemporary social allegories, bringing 21st-century relevance to its interstellar setting. While *The Original Series* addressed Cold War anxieties, racial integration and the Vietnam War, *Discovery* brings the franchise’s allegorical





storytelling into the modern era, exploring issues such as identity, nationalism, trauma, inclusion and the ethical dilemmas of new technologies.

One of the most prominent allegories is the Season 1 arc involving the Federation-Klingon War. The story is more than just an action-driven conflict; it serves as a pointed commentary on the dangers of xenophobia, cultural isolationism and the seductive power of fear. The Klingon rallying cry “Remain Klingon!” resonates as a parallel to real-world nationalist rhetoric, challenging viewers to reflect on the consequences of dehumanizing the “other.” The show asks difficult questions: How do societies maintain their ideals under existential threat? Is it possible to hold onto one’s principles in times of war, or does survival demand moral compromise? These themes echo not only the anxieties of the 1960s, but also contemporary debates about bor-

ders, refugees and cultural preservation.

The series further delves into themes of trauma, mental health and recovery. Characters like Ash Tyler, who endures profound psychological and physical torment as a result of Klingon manipulation, and Michael Burnham, who grapples with guilt and estrangement, are depicted with nuance and empathy. Rather than shying away from the aftermath of violence and loss, *Discovery* devotes significant narrative space to healing, therapy and the importance of support systems — a progressive approach that normalizes the discussion of mental health in a genre that has sometimes overlooked it.

*Discovery’s* commitment to inclusion is another powerful social allegory. By foregrounding a diverse cast and introducing characters who are Black, Asian, LGBTQ+, non-binary and transgender, the series reflects

and celebrates the plurality of today’s society. The everyday normalization of Stamets and Culber’s relationship, the introduction of Adira Tal (the franchise’s first non-binary character) and Gray Tal (a transgender character) are not just boxes checked for representation — they are integral to the narrative and treated with the dignity and depth that real-world diversity deserves. Their stories spark conversations about identity, acceptance and the evolving definition of family, offering both inspiration and validation to viewers who have longed to see themselves reflected on the bridge of a Starfleet vessel.

Other allegorical threads run through the series, as well. The fractured Federation of Season 3, for example, mirrors contemporary concerns about polarization, division and the loss of shared ideals. The crew’s quest to rebuild the Federation and restore



trust among its disparate members becomes a metaphor for the challenges facing any society struggling to overcome division and rediscover unity.

By weaving these modern social allegories into its storytelling, *Star Trek: Discovery* ensures that the franchise's legacy of cultural critique and hopeful vision for the future remains as vital as ever. The show invites audiences not just to escape into the stars but to return to Earth with a renewed commitment to justice, empathy and progress.

Moreover, *Discovery* does not shy away from the complexities and challenges that come with diversity. The show address-

es prejudice and misunderstanding head-on, whether in the context of Starfleet's sometimes-fraught relationship with the Klingons, Burnham's struggle to bridge her human and Vulcan heritage, or the crew's efforts to welcome and support Adira and Gray. These stories mirror real-world struggles for recognition, acceptance and equality, making *Discovery's* vision of the future both aspirational and deeply relevant.

By breaking new ground in representation, *Star Trek: Discovery* not only honors the franchise's pioneering spirit but also ensures its continued relevance. The series stands as a testament

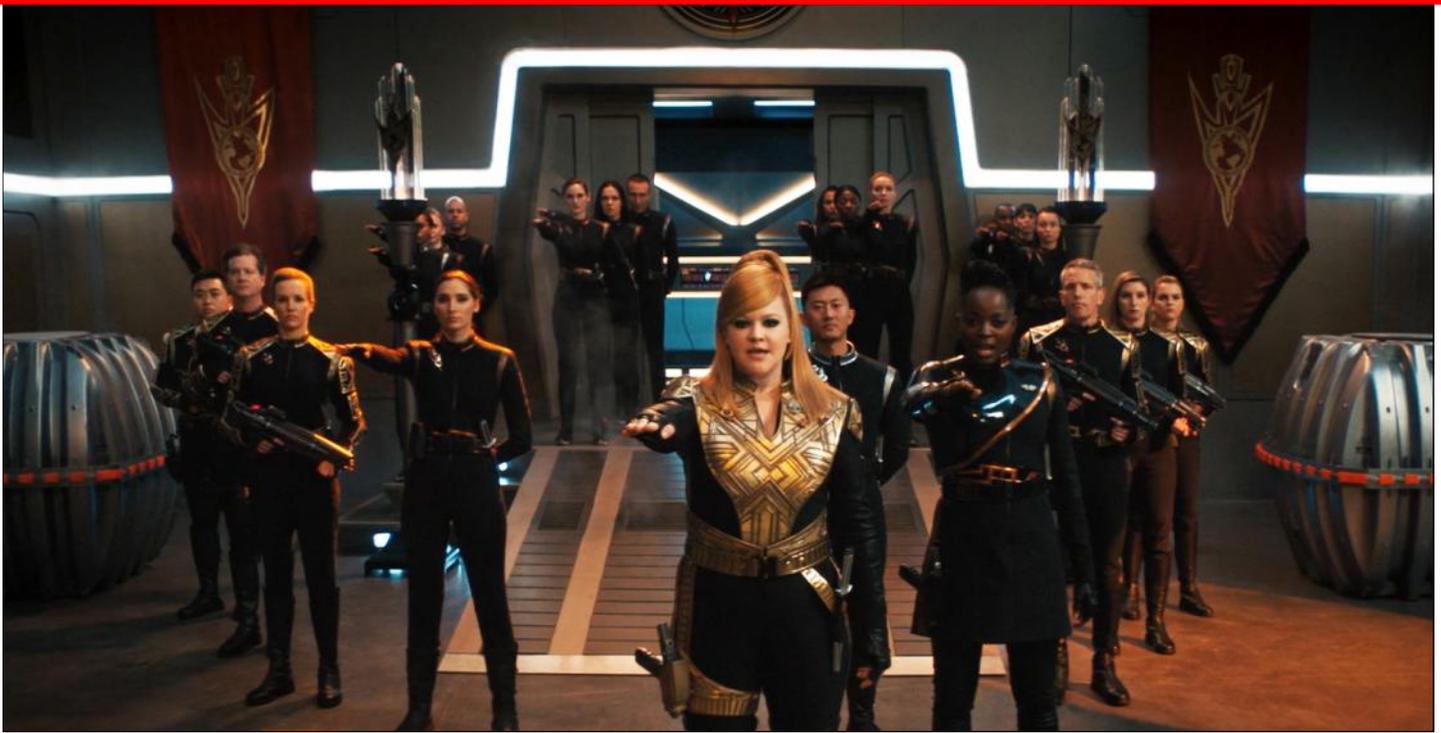
to the power of visibility and the importance of telling stories that reflect the rich diversity of the world — and the universe — around us.

### **Expanding the Mythos: Technology, Time and the Unknown**

*Star Trek: Discovery* doesn't just pay homage to the existing lore of *Star Trek* — it boldly expands it, introducing new technologies, concepts and timelines that push the boundaries of what's possible in the franchise's universe. These innovations keep the franchise fresh, open up previously unimagined storytelling avenues, and underscore *Star Trek's* core ethos of curiosity and exploration.

A centerpiece of this expansion is the introduction of the spore drive, a propulsion system unlike anything seen before in *Star Trek*. Powered by the mycelial network — a vast, subspace web of life that permeates the galaxy — the spore drive enables the USS *Discovery* to travel instan-





taneously across vast distances, essentially “jumping” from point to point via spores and a living navigator. This technology, grounded in real-world mycology and quantum theory, is both fantastical and rooted in scientific speculation, reflecting the franchise’s tradition of blending hard science with imaginative leaps.

The spore drive’s existence raises philosophical and ethical questions about the impact of technological advancement, ecological responsibility, and the unforeseen consequences of scientific discovery, echoing real-world debates about disruptive innovation.

The spore drive also serves as a narrative engine for the series, enabling plots that would be impossible in previous *Trek* shows. Whether it’s appearing behind enemy lines in the Klingon War, escaping the Mirror Universe, or responding to crises on a galactic scale, *Discovery’s* unique mode of travel is integral to the

show’s fast-paced, serial storytelling. The mycelial network itself is more than mere sci-fi technobabble; it becomes a character in its own right, with its own needs, mysteries and vulnerabilities. Stamets’ connection to the network, and the storyline involving Dr. Hugh Culber’s resurrection within it, add new spiritual and metaphysical dimensions to the *Star Trek* canon.

Another major leap in expanding the mythos is *Discovery’s* unprecedented time jump at the end of Season 2. By propelling the crew and ship nearly a thousand years into the future — well beyond the timeline explored by any previous *Star Trek* series — the show emancipates itself from the constraints of established canon. This move allows *Discovery* to chart completely new territory: a fractured Federation, the aftermath of “The Burn” (a cataclysmic event that renders warp travel nearly impossible), and the challenge of rekindling hope and unity

in a galaxy that has lost its way.

This future setting introduces new species, factions, technologies and social dynamics. With the Federation diminished and new powers rising, the crew of *Discovery* must become both explorers and diplomats, re-establishing old ideals in a galaxy that barely remembers them. This opens up fresh opportunities to explore themes of rebuilding, adaptation and rediscovery — themes deeply resonant with *Trek’s* foundational optimism.

The series also deepens and reinterprets familiar *Trek* mythology. The Mirror Universe arc, for example, expands upon the parallel universe first encountered in *The Original Series*, offering a grittier, more morally ambiguous take on “what might have been.” The show explores the psychological toll of crossing between worlds, the allure and danger of unchecked power, and the possibility of redemption for even the darkest characters — embodied



most strikingly in the arc of Emperor Philippa Georgiou.

*Discovery* further builds the lore by introducing new alien species, such as the mysterious and emotionless Species 10-C, and by exploring the inner workings of established ones, like the Kelpien homeworld of Kaminar or the intricacies of Vulcan/Romulan reunification. The show's willingness to venture into these unexplored corners of the *Star Trek* universe not only expands the canon but also invites audiences to imagine a future that is richer and more complex than ever before.

Technological innovations, too, abound. The show features programmable matter, personal transporters, advanced artificial intelligence (such as Control, the antagonist of Season 2) and new forms of communication and medicine. These advancements push the boundaries of what *Star Trek* technology can do, but al-

ways with an eye on the ethical, social and personal ramifications — staying true to the franchise's commitment to thoughtful speculation.

By expanding the mythos so boldly, *Star Trek: Discovery* both honors and reinvigorates the franchise's tradition of imagining the unknown. It demonstrates that the final frontier is not a fixed destination, but an ever-evolving horizon, constantly redrawn by the daring and curiosity of those willing to explore it.

### The Continuing Mission

In the final analysis, *Star Trek: Discovery* is both a tribute and a trailblazer — honoring the spirit of exploration and optimism at the heart of *Star Trek* while fearlessly charting a course into unknown narrative galaxies. By weaving together visual and thematic homages, groundbreaking representation and innovative

storytelling, *Discovery* ensures that the franchise continues to inspire new generations.

The enduring appeal of *Star Trek* lies in its capacity to evolve without losing sight of its core values. *Discovery's* journey — marked by risk, reinvention and reverence — proves that the final frontier is not a fixed destination, but an ever-expanding horizon. As the captain and crew of the *Discovery* would say: Let's fly.



**MARK SICKLE:** Mark Sickle is an Egyptologist (archaeologist) by day, diehard Trekkie all the time. Founder of the Star Trek Family. Lives in West Virginia with his beautiful wife Lisa, puppies Odo, Kira, Wesley and Jadzia; and kitties Nala, Cymba, Cena, Elleadora and Aeolia.



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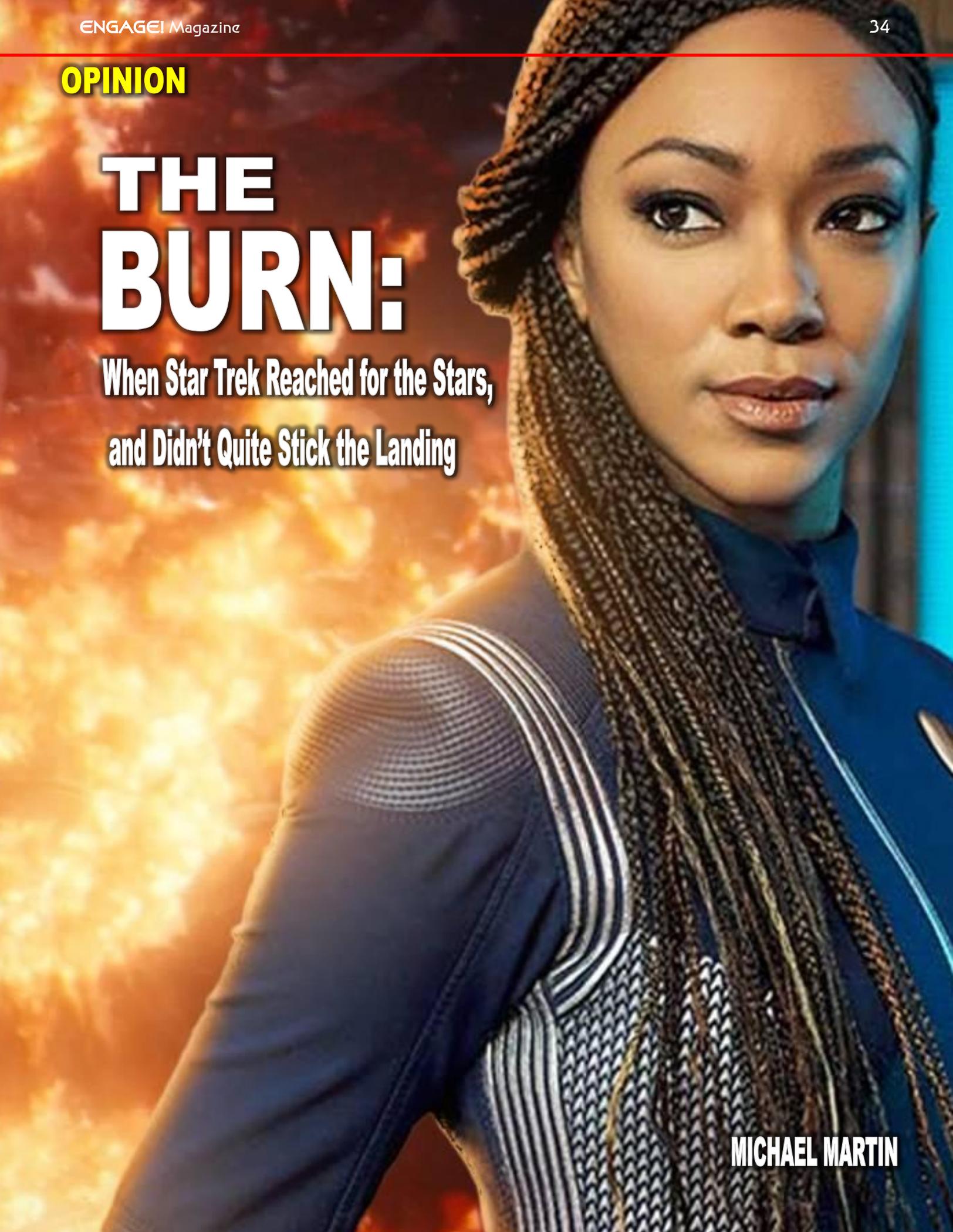


**OPINION**

# THE BURN:

**When Star Trek Reached for the Stars,  
and Didn't Quite Stick the Landing**

**MICHAEL MARTIN**



**W**hen *Star Trek: Discovery* introduced “The Burn,” I felt something I hadn’t felt from modern *Star Trek* in a long time: genuine intrigue mixed with awe. Not the quick-hit excitement of a flashy space battle or a surprise cameo, but the slow, unsettling pull of a big idea, one that suggested consequences, loss and a galaxy fundamentally changed. It was truly a new concept never really explored before: What would the galaxy be like if there was no warp drive?

The Burn was bold. It was audacious. It was frightening in a quiet, existential way. And for a while, it worked.

A single moment in galactic history where nearly all active dilithium went inert, causing warp cores across the galaxy to detonate almost simultaneously. Countless ships were lost. Entire civilizations are isolated overnight. The Federation, once the moral and logistical backbone of known space, is reduced to a shadow of itself. Exploration abandoned. Trust was fractured. Hope was rationed.

That premise alone felt like classic *Star Trek* filtered through a more modern lens. It wasn’t about a villain to defeat or a war to win. It was about fragility. About what happens when a civilization grows so dependent on a single technology that it forgets to imagine life without it. About the idea that even utopias can collapse, not through evil, but through overconfidence.

For several episodes, *Discovery* let that idea breathe. And during that time, The Burn felt like

one of the most intriguing narrative swings *Star Trek* had taken in decades.

But by the time the curtain was pulled back, and the cause of The Burn was revealed, that sense of awe had curdled into disappointment. Not anger. Not outrage. Just a sinking realization that something monumental had been reduced to something painfully small.

This is not an argument that *Discovery* “betrayed” *Star Trek*, or that it failed because it dared to be emotional. *Star Trek* has always been emotional. This is an argument that The Burn failed because its execution, and especially its explanation, did not rise to the level of the idea it introduced.

And that, to me, is the real tragedy of The Burn.

### **A Concept That Promised Consequences**

What made The Burn immediately compelling was how thoroughly it reshaped the *Star Trek* universe. This wasn’t another alternate timeline or localized disaster. This was a galaxy-wide trau-

ma that had clearly left scars.

When *Discovery* jumped into the 32nd century, the absence of the Federation spoke louder than any exposition. Starfleet was no longer a constant presence. Warp travel was rare, dangerous, and fearful. Worlds had turned inward. Former allies treated one another with suspicion. Even the language of optimism, the hallmark of *Star Trek*, felt muted.

For a franchise that has often been accused of hitting a reset button, this felt refreshingly permanent. The Burn wasn’t just backstory; it was atmosphere. It shaped every interaction, every hesitation, every compromise.

More importantly, it reframed the Federation itself. For decades, *Star Trek* has presented the Federation as resilient to the point of inevitability. It bends, but it never truly breaks. The Burn challenged that assumption. It suggested that ideals alone are not enough. That infrastructure matters. That unity requires maintenance. That even the best intentions can be undone by systems built without redundancy.





That's a powerful idea — arguably one of the most adult ideas *Star Trek* has ever seriously entertained.

### Fan theories and most intriguing cause of The Burn

For much of the season, The Burn functioned as a mystery with enormous narrative gravity. What could possibly cause something so vast, so precise, so devastating?

As we watched throughout the season, many different theories began to surface. One of the most popular fan theories involved the Omega Particles. It was already established that Omega Particles can destroy subspace throughout the galaxy. Was it possible that someone was experimenting with Omega Particles and the experiment went horribly wrong?

Other theories hint at a rogue alien civilization or unknown civilization creating a powerful weapon that it destroyed

subspace and caused the Burn intentionally. Maybe even a pre-warp civilization that was on the cusp warp travel and it went drastically wrong.

Perhaps over time with constant warp travel it destabilizes subspace. This had been slightly explored in the episode "Force of Nature," that traveling in certain areas over a period can cause ruptures throughout subspace. Is it possible that with several hundred years of space travel that it finally gave in.

What all these theories had in common was scale. They implied responsibility, consequences and uncomfortable truths. They suggested that The Burn might force *Star Trek* to interrogate its own legacy, especially the Federation's long history of technological expansion without fully grappling with its risks.

That was the promise: not just an answer, but a reckoning.

### The Reveal and the Deflation

When the truth of The

Burn was finally revealed, my first reaction wasn't anger. It was confusion. Then disappointment.

The cause, as we learned, was Su'Kal — a Kelpien child born with a rare mutation that allowed him to interact with dilithium on a subspace level. When his mother died and he experienced overwhelming grief, his emotional outburst sent a shockwave through subspace, destabilizing dilithium across the galaxy.

It was tragic. It was intimate. It was deeply *Discovery*.

And it felt completely wrong for what The Burn had been set up to represent.

This wasn't a case of the explanation being "too emotional." *Star Trek* has always used emotion as a catalyst. Nor was it inherently bad that the cause was personal rather than malicious. The problem was that the scale of the explanation did not match the scale of the catastrophe.

Billions died. Civilizations collapsed. The Federation frac-



tured. And the root cause was not a decision, a failure of ethics, or a systemic flaw, but an accident born of trauma and isolation.

In one stroke, *The Burn* went from being a cautionary tale about interdependence and fragility to an almost cosmic accident. Something no one caused. Something no one could have reasonably prevented. Something that didn't require the galaxy to change, only to heal one individual.

That shift drained the story of its moral weight.

### When Tragedy Replaces Accountability

One of *Star Trek's* greatest strengths has always been its willingness to assign responsibility, even when that responsibility is uncomfortable. From the Prime Directive to the Dominion War, the franchise has repeatedly asked: What did we do wrong? And what must we change going forward?

*The Burn* never really asks those questions.

Once Su'Kal is understood, the galaxy's greatest tragedy becomes a matter of compassion

rather than reflection. There is no reckoning with the Federation's reliance on dilithium. No exploration of why a single point of failure was allowed to underpin galactic civilization. No examination of whether Starfleet's relentless expansion contributed to the disaster.

Instead, the Federation emerges morally intact. Wounded, yes — but not culpable.

That may be comforting, but it is also dramatically unsatisfying. A disaster of this magnitude should force systemic introspection, not just emotional closure.

### A Resolution That Felt Too Easy

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of *The Burn* is how quickly the galaxy seems ready to move on once the mystery is solved.

Yes, dilithium remains scarce. Yes, rebuilding takes time. But the existential dread that defined the season dissipates almost immediately. The Federation's decline is framed less as a warning and more as a temporary setback, something that optimism and perseverance can fix.

That undercuts the very

premise that made *The Burn* compelling. Trauma on this scale doesn't resolve neatly. Civilizations don't rebound simply because the cause is understood. Trust, once broken, is not easily restored.

*Star Trek* has always been hopeful, but its best stories earn that hope through struggle, sacrifice and hard choices. *The Burn's* resolution felt like hope by narrative necessity, rather than by consequence.

### Emotion Isn't the Problem, Imbalance Is

To be clear, *Discovery's* emotional focus is not inherently a flaw. In fact, some of its strongest moments come from its willingness to let characters feel pain, fear and vulnerability. Doug Jones' performance as both Saru and Su'Kal is deeply moving, and the tragedy of Su'Kal's existence is genuinely affecting.

But emotion, when not balanced with thematic rigor, can flatten a story instead of deepening it.

By centering *The Burn* entirely on one individual's trauma, the show unintentionally minimized the collective trauma of the galaxy. What should have been a story about civilizations grappling with loss became a story about helping one person heal — and then moving forward.

Both stories have value. They just shouldn't have been the same story.

### What Could Have Been

In my opinion, I believe *The Burn* could have been handled more effectively if its cause had



been rooted in systemic failure rather than an isolated tragedy, forcing the Federation to take on its own responsibility in the disaster. By tying the catastrophe to a long-term overreliance on dilithium, a classified Starfleet experiment or cumulative damage to subspace itself, the story could have transformed the mystery into a meaningful reckoning with the consequences of unchecked progress. Such an approach would not have required abandoning the emotional core of *Discovery*, but it would have balanced personal suffering with institutional accountability allowing the resolution of The Burn to reshape Federation policy, ethics and identity in a lasting way, rather than offering closure that felt emotionally sincere yet thematically incomplete. The frustration surrounding The Burn comes not from what it was, but from what it so clearly *could have been*.

It could have been a story about the unintended consequences of technological dependency. About how even enlightened societies can fail when they prioritize expansion over resilience. How the Federation must confront its own blind spots if it hopes to

survive.

Instead, it became a story about tragedy without accountability, loss without reckoning, and recovery without transformation.

That doesn't make it bad television. But it does make it a missed opportunity.

### Why It Still Matters

Despite my disappointment, I don't think The Burn should be dismissed or forgotten. It remains one of the most ambitious ideas modern *Star Trek* has attempted, and ambition counts for something.

The Burn tried to push *Star Trek* forward, to imagine a future where the Federation's ideals are no longer guaranteed, where hope must be rebuilt rather than assumed. That is a worthy goal, even if the execution faltered.

If nothing else, The Burn sparked conversation. Debate. Reflection. And that, in its own way, is very *Star Trek*.

### Final Thoughts

I wanted to love The Burn. For a while, I did. Its initial concept was rich, unsettling and full of promise. It dared to do something *Star Trek* rarely attempts: It

broke the galaxy in a way that felt plausible, systemic and unsettling. By removing reliable warp drive travel and collapsing the Federation without a war or a clear enemy, the Burn reframed the future as fragile rather than inevitable, forcing *Star Trek* to confront themes of scarcity, dependence and the cost of progress. For much of the season, the mystery carried weight and promised a reckoning with the Federation's own assumptions and failures. That is why the result was so disappointing. The eventual reveal reduced a civilization-shattering catastrophe to an isolated, accidental tragedy, stripping the story of the moral complexity and institutional accountability that the premise seemed to demand.

The Burn didn't fail because it was bold. It failed because it didn't follow its boldness through to the end.

And that may be the most *Star Trek* lesson of all: Great ideas demand equally great responsibility.



**MICHAEL MARTIN:** I've been a *Star Trek* fan since I was a kid. I grew up on *The Next Generation*, fell in love with *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager*. It was one of the few shows that my father and I would watch together and still share the love for the franchise today. The show's ideals, hope, unity and moral courage have always meant something real to me. It gives me great pleasure to see where humanity can go and what can be achieved.





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# DOUG JONES

MELISSA BARTELL

## The Man Behind the Mask: Doug Jones on Transformation, Empathy and Being Remembered

It's sail-away day on the Comic-Con cruise, and Doug Jones is calling from his stateroom — barely. The beloved actor, known for disappearing into prosthetics as some of genre television and film's most iconic creatures, flew in just this morning from Austin, Texas, where he was working on a TV show. He was supposed to arrive the night before with the other actors, but as always, Jones made it work. "It's all good," he assures me with characteristic warmth, his voice tinged with exhaustion but no less gracious. "I'm in my stateroom now. All is good."

We'd met before, years ago on a *Star Trek* cruise. I reminded him of the creature-building workshop where I'd invented manatees that ate psychedelic lettuce. His laugh is instant and genuine. "Yes, I remember that," he says. "That was the little artistic thing we did with the nice fellow named Robb Pearlman hosting it. He's on this cruise right now, too."

These days, Jones finds himself in unfamiliar territory: being the subject rather than the transformer. Filmmaker William Conlin, who previously created the documentary "Making Apes," approached Jones' manager Derek about making Jones the focus of a new film. The project is now well underway, though Jones admits he's still grappling with the concept.

"Well, young filmmaker



William Conlin contacted my manager, Derek, to see if he could get access to me. Apparently William was a fan of mine, which was very sweet of him, and he thought I would be a good subject for a documentary. Derek checked with me, and now Derek is a producer on the documentary as well."

"My first reaction was, oh, no, I don't know what there is to document. And then I thought, oh gosh, that's going to be a lot of work for me. They said, 'No, no, no, we'll do everything, we promise.' And I'm like, no, because there's people and contacts and numbers and emails that you're not going to have that I'm going to have to provide. It's going to be work for me. I know it is."

The humility is genuine, not performative. Jones pauses,

as if weighing whether to share his next thought.

"I don't want to act like I'm faking humility because I really, truly don't think I'm worthy of this. I really don't. I've watched many documentaries in my life, and I thought I don't know that I'm the right person to have one done. But everyone who's been told about it seems to think so, and it's very nice to hear. So maybe there will be an audience for it after all."

The filmmakers have spent over a year gathering interviews with Jones's co-stars and collaborators — Noah Wiley from "Falling Skies," Sonequa Martin-Green and others from *Star Trek: Discovery*, Anthony Rapp and more. Now they're expanding to include his personal circle: his wife Laurie of

nearly 42 years, their adopted daughter Natisha, and friends who've known him since childhood. They've been following him to conventions, capturing candid moments with fans after they leave his table.

For someone whose career has been built on transformation — hiding behind layers of latex, foam and artistry — being the documentary's constant presence feels unexpectedly vulnerable.

"The other part of the documentary that's rather naked feeling is that they're following the real me around. It seems like when you put your real self out there, you become more of a target for ridicule. Whereas being able to take over the body of a monster or a creature and make him come to life — any ridicule wouldn't be for me personally. You know what I mean? There's a layer."

At 65, Jones is experiencing another kind of transformation — one that doesn't require prosthetics.

"But also, what will be cov-

ered in this documentary is that I'm 65 now, and as I'm aging, I am sort of phasing out of monsters and playing more humans. I have been playing nothing but humans for the last two years as it is now. I'll never say never. I would go under rubber makeup again if it's the right project, the right story, the right director, the right costars, the right money — can we be honest? But that's not what I'm seeking at the moment. If those gigs come looking for me and it's the right fit, then great. But otherwise, I'm really enjoying playing humans and letting my body rest a bit. The last thing I wanted to do ever — I never wanted to be the old guy in a rubber monster suit with people going, 'oh shoot, he used to be so good.'"

His Instagram followers — myself included — have delighted in watching this shift. His annual 60-second Christmas videos have become a beloved tradition, showcasing his gift for physical comedy in bite-sized form. As it turns out, those silly videos had professional consequences Jones never anticipated.

"Well, you want to hear something funny? Those silly Christmas videos are what got me that TV gig that I just did in Austin. Yeah, crazy. It's a miniseries, actually, of six episodes — a comedy show with a couple comedy legends, Roseanne Barr and Randy Quaid. Now, like 'em or hate 'em they came looking for me because Randy's wife has been following me on Twitter, or X now, and saw that video and was like, 'oh my gosh, that's the vibe of this character you were looking for.' So, it went up the flagpole. And they

came calling for me to play this wacky character in this very funny, silly show."

The project remains shrouded in secrecy — Jones doesn't even know what it's called or where it will air. "It said *unnamed streamer*," he explains with a shrug I can hear through the phone. But it was fully crewed as a big-budget production, which suggests someone believes in the vision.

### The Art of Saying Everything Without Words

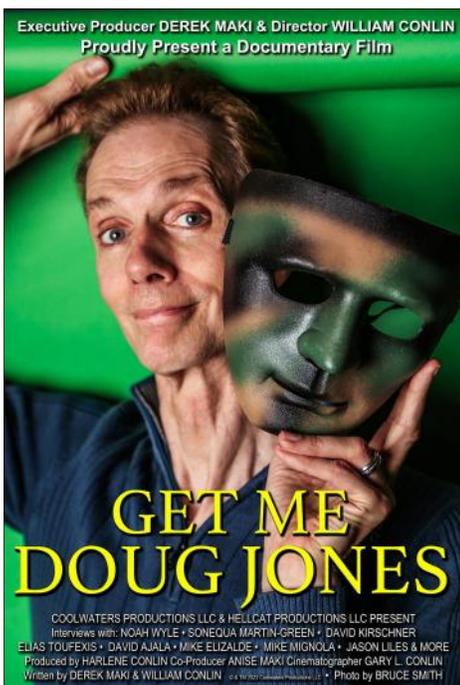
To understand Jones' unique approach to performance, you have to go back to Ball State University and a dormitory hallway where a senior named Reed K. Steele noticed something special in a goofy freshman.

"Mimes were — if you mention the word mime to people, they think of that weird guy in the park that follows you around and makes fun of you, right? Freak on the street is what they think."

But Steele saw past the stereotypes. He was the leader of Mime Over Matter (the name alone is perfect), and he invited Jones to see a show.

"He approached me one day and said, 'have you ever heard of the art of mime?' And I said, 'yeah, in one of my drama classes, you know, pantomime, sure.' Well, he told me about the troupe and said, 'come see one of our shows, and we're going to be having auditions soon to add more people to the troupe. So, I'd love to have you come have a look at it.'"

What Jones saw that night





Doug Jones and Sonia Guy on stage in *Mime Over Matter*, circa 1981.

changed everything.

"So, I did see one of their shows and that's when I was like, oh. This is like — that was a stage performance — I went on just a magical ride. No props, no sets. No costume changes, just these people in black leotards with white paint on their faces and little black lines around their eyes and definition around their mouth to express—to accentuate their expressions. And I went on a journey of laughter and crying and sighing and awing and applauding and cheering."

"I auditioned for the troupe and got in, of course, which was very sweet. And by the time I was a senior, I was the head of the mime troupe myself asking young people to try out for *Mime Over Matter*."

The training proved invaluable — learning to communicate without words, to convey weight and emotion through pure physicality. But Jones's education in embodiment didn't stop there.

"But that was very, very good early training for me to learn

how to communicate without using words. Everything else is employed, right? Your facial expression, your gesturing, your posture, your body language in general, all of it. And then creating — if you pick up something and it has weight, but you're holding nothing, how do you play that weight? You really do have to train your body to show and to perform."

There was also Charlie Cardinal.

"And the other thing, honestly, that helped prepare me for the career I didn't know I was going to have yet was my junior and senior year at college, I was Charlie Cardinal, the school mascot. In a big red bird suit with yellow leotards and big floppy yellow feet. I got great legs for a bird, by the way. It didn't look like a real creature performer thing. But I had to make him as real as he could be to entertain the crowd at basketball games. And I loved it. And I sweated my ass off. Ball State was very kind. They to this day will say that I'm the best Charlie Cardinal they ever had and they'll take full credit for starting my career."

Jones's mime lineage reads like theatrical aristocracy. Steele was trained by Richmond Shepard, the go-to mime for television and film in Los Angeles. Shepard was trained by Marcel Marceau himself. "In the training vein," Jones says, "I would be a great-grandson of Marcel Marceau's." He also credits the husband-and-wife duo Shields and Yarnell, who brought mime to the masses through variety shows like *Donny & Marie* with their whimsical robot sketches, "The Clinkers."

"I thought they were incredible.

That took mime to a more whimsical place. Marceau is artistic. And everything was so beautiful and dance-like with him. With Shields and Yarnell, it was more like waka-waka-waka, funny sketches. Bob Shields came out to the audience every so often in their series, their variety show, and asked for suggestions from the audience of things that he could act out. And someone said, bacon, frying in a pan. Without a beat, he threw himself on the ground and started *sizzling* — and I remember being home going, that's brilliant, and laughing my ass off."

### The Internal Art of External Transformation

When Jones talks about his craft, something surprising emerges: the prosthetics don't fundamentally change his approach.

"Honestly — and this is what surprises people — it's not that much different with makeup or without it for me. I feel that acting is an internalized art. You really need to take in the character's wants, needs, loves, motivations, fears, joys, past story issues, family dynamics — all those things have to be in place that you study before you play a part. And the script will give you a lot of that information, and consultation with your director will give you a lot of that information."

"And then you interpret all that you've learned and see what happens on the day of filming when you're interacting with the other actors, and the story kind of unfolds itself based on all the personalities that come into the room that are prepared ahead of time."

"Now, the added layer of skin that

I would have on as an alien or as a monster or creature of some sort does add a physical element that is like, OK, I've got all the internals going, but the internals have to motivate how this guy moves. Is he part animal, part man? Do I need to work that animal into his ecosystem here? Is he very child-like? Is he really old and decrepit? Is he menacing or is he more fluid and dance-like? All those things will come into play, but it really has to start — you can't just have great elbows. Those elbows have to be motivated by all that pre-work ahead of time."

I mention the principle from improv: if you're being emo-

tionally truthful, the audience will follow you anywhere. His agreement is immediate.

"I would absolutely believe that for sure. We are pretending, but if we pretend at a level where we believe, where we can click into believing it — like, for instance, when I was playing one of my favorite movies I've ever been in, 'The Shape of Water' —"

His voice softens with genuine affection when he talks about working with Sally Hawkins.

"Oh, I just — well, the romance totally sold me too, right? But working with Sally Hawkins, who was another dedicated and,

oh gosh, such a deep and grounded actress who can put so many layers behind all of her characters. She's a chameleon. She can be — every movie I've seen her in is completely different than the one before."

"Her character in 'The Shape of Water,' when we were face to face in our scenes together, when Guillermo Del Toro yelled action and the scene — the crew and everything went away. And what remained was the reality of our scene that we were having together. We were pretending at such a level that it was real for us in those moments until he yelled cut. That's when — and that's a moment that so many actors can relate to. Like, oh, yeah, that's when you have that click with another actor. Oh, it's — that's why we all got into this business."

When I asked about discovering unexpected humanity in characters perceived as "other," Jones returns immediately to "The Shape of Water."

"Yeah. Let's go back to 'The Shape of Water.' That's probably the prime example. He's an animal from the wild that was caught and is being presented and introduced as a dangerous beast from the Amazon river. And it turns out he's a romantic who loves music and he likes hard boiled eggs. So that was — and oh gosh, I loved, and he was very protective of the ones he loves, and that was a nice surprise, I think."

**Commander Saru: Leading with Love**

But it's Saru, his beloved





Kelpien from *Star Trek: Discovery*, who gets the most expansive discussion. For many fans, Saru was their introduction to Jones's work — a milestone character who existed at the intersection of sci-fi and horror audiences that don't always overlap.

I share Robert Englund's observation that horror hits the amygdala while sci-fi engages the intellect and add that *Star Trek* fans respond with both. Jones pauses. "Wait, I'm sorry, the horror goes right to your what?" When I clarify — the fear-pleasure center versus the thinking brain — his delight is audible. "I've never heard that before. That is brilliant. I'm going to use that."

Saru's evolution over five seasons gave Jones rare space to peel back layers of a character over time.

"The writers kept surprising me with him as we went on. As the seasons progressed and Saru's storyline progressed, and we got to see more backstory and meet his sister and see flashbacks to his childhood or his teenage years living in a hut and pulling

kelp out of the sea—there was so much there. And he had so much heart and soul. When we first meet him in season one, he was more of a scaredy-cat that was trying to cover up his own fears by being as a high-ranking officer on a starship — you know, very duty-oriented and a little prickly."

His relationship with Sonequa Martin-Green's Michael Burnham became one of the show's emotional anchors.

"But as the show progressed, his relationship with

Sonequa Martin-Green, with Burnham, was gorgeous to watch grow. They were kind of like brother and sister that were at each other's throats at the beginning and then at the end they were brother and sister who had each other's backs. And that's a big difference, right?"

Physically, Saru's distinctive walk — a challenge Jones relished — remained largely consistent. The only notable shift came after Vahar'ai in season two, Doug shares, "when my threat ganglia fell out and the innate fear that I was born with is now gone, and I've gone through my adolescence as a Kelpien. I think he walked with a bit more confidence, and that was a subtle change if anything. And his reaction to the daily issues that came through the window of our bridge — his reactions were more commanding and confident, I think."

"But as far as physicality in general, once I established that walk for him, that's how he walked. You know what I mean?" That walk became so distinctive





that Jones became the only person who could teach it.

"Every Kelpien that came on the show, and we had a few, whether it was when we visited the home planet of Kaminar or when my sister beamed aboard and we had her on the ship for part of the episode — everybody who played a Kelpien had to go through a little training session with me first because since I established how a Kelpien moves, they wanted to walk everybody through it. Everybody, that would include background actors that might be walking through the back somewhere. So that was kind of — it was a treat for me to have established a very distinctive walk that they thought I was the only one who could teach it."

But what fascinates me most about Saru is his leadership style — built on empathy, restraint and attentiveness, rather than dominance. What did playing that kind of power teach Jones?

"He leads with love, and I'm a firm believer that every decision we make in the day is either motivated by fear or love. And he started his decisions in love and ended his decisions in love as the show progressed."

"So, instead of being the type of leader or boss who talks down to the crew members or sees a mistake and ridicules somebody for it, I thought he had a very nice soft, supportive touch, like, 'here's how it might go better. I love what you're doing, but we're not quite there yet. How about if we tried this instead?' He was that kind of a guy. And that was very easy for me to play because in my own life, I'm not one who scolds or yells or I'm not the guy who tells a barista that they got my order wrong and yells about it. You know what I mean?"

*Star Trek* has always asked who gets to be seen as sentient, who gets to be seen as worthy.

Saru's journey — from the first Kelpien to leave his world, through Starfleet Academy, to becoming a high-ranking officer — embodied that question.

"Right. Oh gosh, I think *Star Trek* has been the leader of television in giving voice and giving validation to anyone, period. And as my character, as a Kelpien, I was the first one of my kind to make contact outside of our world and to go through Starfleet Academy and to become a high-ranking officer on a ship. I was a shining example of *anyone is welcome and anyone can*. I think that was message enough for me. I was very satisfied with him."

And then the writers gave him a love story.

"And the other thing I'd like to mention, of course, going back to the love issue — when the writers did me that lovely favor of giving Saru a love story with the beautiful Tara Roslin, who played President T'Rina. That was another bonus validation that love is also available to anyone, no matter what you look like or what planet you might come from, right?"

The romance between Saru and T'Rina felt organic, never contrived — and refreshingly featured two characters who weren't in their 20s. "I know, thank you," Jones says when I mention this. "Mature love. It exists."

### The Gift of Never Growing Up

There's a quality to Jones that defies his 65 years — a playfulness and joy that radiates through even a phone call. I tell him I think he has youthful energy.



His response traces back to the set of "Hellboy" and a lesson from Jeffrey Tambor.

"Thank you for thinking that of me. Oh gosh. I worked with an actor named Jeffrey Tambor on the 'Hellboy' movies. And he was older than me, but he was such a goofy, zany, funny man. Between takes, he would say things that would get us all giggling right before the camera rolled. So, he was constantly ruining things for us in a funny way."

"And I asked him one day, 'what is it that keeps you so boy-ish?' And he said, 'I have never lost my sense of play, and I would advise that no one ever loses their sense of play.' And I thought, well, OK, that's it. That's my motto to live by right from now on."

He draws the parallel to children discovering the world.

"You know, when you watch a child discovering something for the first time, whether it's like a Hot Wheel car or even like a stick in the backyard, and what can become of it, you know? What can I pretend that it is and

what can I build with it? Yeah, let's never lose that."

"And for me too, it's the people-connection thing. When you see toddlers meeting each other and playing for the first time together, when they've never met each other before, there's no issues. There're no prejudices, there's no preconceived notions of like who's going to be what to what? It's just like, 'Oh, hi, let's be friends. Oh, isn't that wonderful?' So, I've taken that into my adult life with me for sure."

### What Comes Next

As Jones looks ahead, the question becomes: what still excites him about transformation and performance when so much of his bucket list has been checked off?

"Oh, dear. Well, that's funny because my bucket list is getting checked off quite a bit. I'm like, what do I have left to play that I'm excited about? Well, honestly, what I'm really excited about now is the human roles that I've been playing, and now that

I'm 65, the category of human that I've been able to play has been — I've grown into a new category."

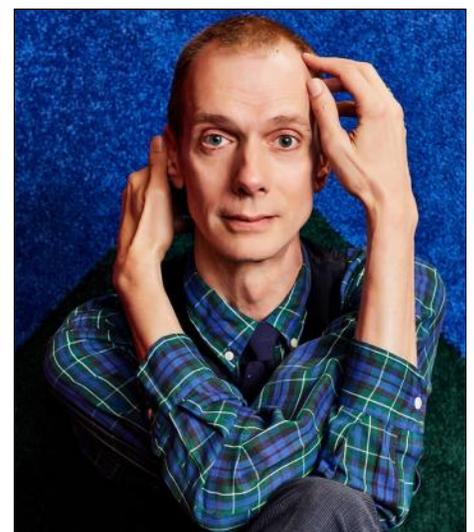
"So, you know, I've been playing humans all along since I started my career. I'll be an actor now for 40 years this coming June, but that'll mark my first TV commercial I got paid for. Not too shabby, I know. So, I've gone through some phases in my look and in my age bracket all this time."

"But as a character actor that does goofy things, or comedy as a human, or monsters, it's like you're allowed to age, there's no cap on that. So, for that I'm very grateful. I'm looking forward to playing more comedic roles. My time on 'What We Do in the Shadows' was just absolutely dreamy to make fun of vampires at that level."

The joy in his voice is unmistakable when he talks about that show. "You go to work and laugh all day? Who would hate that, right?"

But there's still one role he's chasing — and it's delightfully specific.

"So, I'm looking forward to doing more comedy. And I'm look-





ing forward to still playing my dream role. Now, I did a Christmas movie that just came out on Amazon this past year called 'All is Merry and Bright.' I played a very goofy, funny delivery guy and I came in throughout the movie and did one funny bit after another. Loved it, loved it, loved it, loved it. But my dream role is — I mean, you might have heard me say this before, but I want to be the dad of a grown woman on a Hallmark-ish kind of Christmas movie where I'm, you know, wearing a sweater with reindeer on it and holding a cup of cocoa while I give her some really sound fatherly advice."

I tell him I'd absolutely watch that — it would probably be the most lighthearted but sincere Christmas movie ever.

After playing so many monsters, demons in human form and corrupt sheriffs, Jones is drawn to benevolent roles. He

lights up telling me about a recent project.

"Right? Oh, and I've been enjoying, you know, having played so many monsters and creatures or humans that are just on the dark side, you know, demons in human form or despicable, corrupt sheriffs, or I've done all of it. I also like the benevolent kind, nice roles."

"And I got to do, well, let me tell you about this one real quick. I got to play a doctor in a family drama movie that was just — the script was absolutely beautiful. I wiped tears away as I read the final page. So, I was just offered two scenes in the movie to open and close the film as the doctor who is giving an older patient his end-of-life prognosis and 'here are your options,' and he goes home to deal with his family and come back with their answers. It was wonderful. And it was written by a psychologist who

had been through end-of-life issues with his own dad."

"When I got to the set, that psychologist/writer was there and what a lovely chat I had with him! I played a doctor who's not just a clinical cold face, but I was the family doctor who's been with this family for years. So, I'm not just a doctor, I'm also a friend. And my patient was the very famous Mike Farrell, who played BJ Honeycutt on 'M\*A\*S\*H.' I know, I was in heaven. Couldn't have been nicer. He was such a gem to work with and so gracious. So that was kind of a dream role that I didn't know I wanted. And once I was there playing it, I was just in heaven."

As for whether Saru might appear on the new Starfleet Academy series, Jones is cautiously optimistic. "No one's told me anything. So, I would say there's a chance because it's in the same timeline and Saru now is with the

Federation as an ambassador. So, he's not on a starship. So, would he be able to come and give a guest lecture? I would think so. But nothing's been offered so far."

**How Does He Want to Be Remembered?**

For my last question, I bring us back to the documentary: If "Get Me, Doug Jones" becomes a way for audiences to better understand his form of physical storytelling, what does he hope it communicates about embodiment, empathy, and what it means to be human?

"Oh my, these are deep questions. You're good. You're good." He pauses, gathering his thoughts.

His answer comes through a perhaps unexpected role model.

"I would hope that they can take away — well, you know, a role model of mine is Dolly Parton, to be honest with you. Nobody doesn't love Dolly Parton, right? So, when she's gone from this earth, she'll be remembered for her career, absolutely, and her hit song after hit song and her writing other hit songs for others, but I think she'll be mostly remembered for her humongous heart, her charity work, her love of kids and those kinds of things that make us human."

"So, I'm going to take my cue from her and when I'm finally gone from this Earth, what I want to be remembered for, yes, the career is going to come up, of course. And this role, that role in this movie, that TV show, sure. And I'm very proud of all that I've done, and I would love for people to talk about that. But I also want

to be remembered as the guy — I want people to say that's the actor who hugged me."

I tell him that as someone who has experienced a Doug Hug — and who has heard countless others describe it as essential, as life-changing — he's well on his way to that legacy.

His response is pure Doug Jones: "Oh, that's very sweet. Thank you for that."

As we wrap up, he thanks me for juggling the interview time to fit his chaotic sail-away schedule. I remind him to hydrate. He laughs — and promises to do so.

And with that, Doug Jones — the man who has spent a career transforming into creatures and aliens while somehow remaining the most human person in the room— heads off to his first commitment of the cruise.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** There will be updates in the near future for crowdfunding opportunities to help support the upcoming documentary project "Get Me Doug Jones." Stay tuned for more!



**MELISSA A. BARTELL:** Melissa A. Bartell is a writer, podcaster, voice actor, improviser and kayak junkie currently living on Florida's Nature Coast. She has one husband, two dogs and only one kayak (so far). Find her at [MissMeliss.com](http://MissMeliss.com) or on social media:

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**REVIEW**



# "UNIFICATION III"

**MELISSA BARTELL**

## Unity Is Not a Destination: “Unification III” and the Long Memory of *Star Trek*

“Unification III,” the seventh episode of *Star Trek: Discovery*’s third season, turns on a destabilizing truth: Vulcan no longer exists. In its place stands Ni’Var — a unified Vulcan–Romulan world whose very name signals the surrender of singular identity. This is not trivia or texture. It is the episode’s philosophical spine.

Burnham and Saru arrive on Ni’Var seeking answers about the Burn. As *Discovery* tracks the black boxes from ships destroyed in the catastrophe, Starfleet believes Ni’Var’s abandoned propulsion project, SB-19, may hold data crucial to decoding the disaster’s origin. Ni’Var’s withdrawal from the Federation followed accusations that SB-19 caused the Burn, and its continued refusal to share information reflects both political estrangement and unresolved internal fracture.

### Ni’Var is not Vulcan preserved. It is Vulcan negotiated

While diplomacy unfolds planetside, *Discovery* quietly marks a turning point of its own. Sylvia Tilly is named acting first officer—an appointment that could have been played for novelty, but instead reinforces the episode’s deeper themes. Authority here is provisional, trust-based, and earned in real time. Tilly’s promotion mirrors Ni’Var itself: growth that feels uncomfortable precisely because it is genuine.



### Spock, Speaking Across Centuries

The episode gains resonance by explicitly situating itself within *Star Trek*’s long memory. Archival footage from *The Next Generation*’s “Unification” two-parter allows Spock to speak across centuries. His reminder that reunification might take decades — or longer — reframes Ni’Var not as an endpoint, but as evidence that progress is possible without resolution ever becoming simple.

For Burnham, Ni’Var is personal without being sentimental. Raised on Vulcan, she confronts a culture that chose evolution over preservation. That tension sharpens through the presence of the Qowat Milat, the Romulan order devoted to absolute candor—and through Burnham’s mother, Gabrielle, who has aligned herself with them.

Truth, the episode suggests, is not singular. It depends on what we are willing to say aloud, and what institutions decide can remain unspoken.

Ni’Var’s scientists remain divided, still wrestling with the legacy of the Vulcan Science Directorate and its tendency to mis-

take logic for infallibility. The Burn becomes less a mystery to solve than a reckoning with what happens when certainty hardens into authority.

Visually and structurally, the episode allows space for that reckoning. Ni’Var is austere and beautiful. Conversations unfold without urgency. Trust is not restored by the final act. It is merely reopened as a possibility.

“Unification III” honors Spock’s long view while grounding it in family, choice, and provisional leadership. Change worth having is slow. Unity is fragile. The future is built not through certainty or speed, but through the courage to choose honesty — first with ourselves, and then with one another.



**MELISSA A. BARTELL:** Melissa A. Bartell is a writer, podcaster, voice actor, improviser and kayak junkie currently living on Florida’s Nature Coast. She has one husband, two dogs and only one kayak (so far). Find her at [MissMeliss.com](https://www.MissMeliss.com) or on social media:

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FAN FICTION



**THE LAST DAYS OF  
RIPPER**

**STEPHEN MIRKIN**

**“W**ait, what? Here they go again. And I was having a nice nap,” thought Ripper the Tardigrade.

Once again, it was awoken from its rest in the containment lab where the spores of the spore drive are kept.

“I guess it’s another one of those damn Black Alerts. Just because me and the spores get along so well and that I know a thing or two about navigating the Mycelial Network, I’m supposed to be at their beck and call?”

This had been the case on so many occasions that the crew of the USS Discovery would need the skills of Ripper to allow the craft to travel great distances as needed. Without Ripper’s assistance, only short hops were successful by the USS Glenn until its loss while trying a longer-distance jump using the spore drive.

“Ha! Without me, these silly humans could not travel the Mycelial Network. Yet, doing so, do they know that it is killing me a little every time I am called upon to use my services?”

And when the call for Black Alert is issued, Ripper is expected to jump into action to allow Dis-

covery to turn a long trip into a short one.

“If they only knew. If it weren’t for this containment system, do they have any idea what I am capable of doing? Do they even know what I did to Kowsky? Of course they do; that’s why I’m locked up in this containment field: for their own safety. That bunch of silly Klingons had no idea what I could do if threatened? Weapons are no match against me.”

And this is true. Ripper has the ability to withstand phaser fire, hand weapons or even solid metal. Nearly all the Discovery crew members considered Ripper to be a threat. But for some reason, it trusted Michael Burnham, allowing itself to be led away, only to be transported to the containment chamber — or cell, as Ripper would call it.

“I trusted Burnham. And this is what I get? A cell? And now they want to use me as a weapon? Why? I’m really a nice being. It’s not my intention to hurt others. But if pushed, I will defend myself against anyone who wants to hurt me. I didn’t really want to hurt Landry, but if you shoot a phaser at me, you better be ready

to suffer the consequences.”

Slowly, Ripper accepted its situation and began to assist the crew of the Discovery in their travels along the Mycelial Network for nearly a month. As time wore on, Burnham could see that the repeated jumps were injuring Ripper.

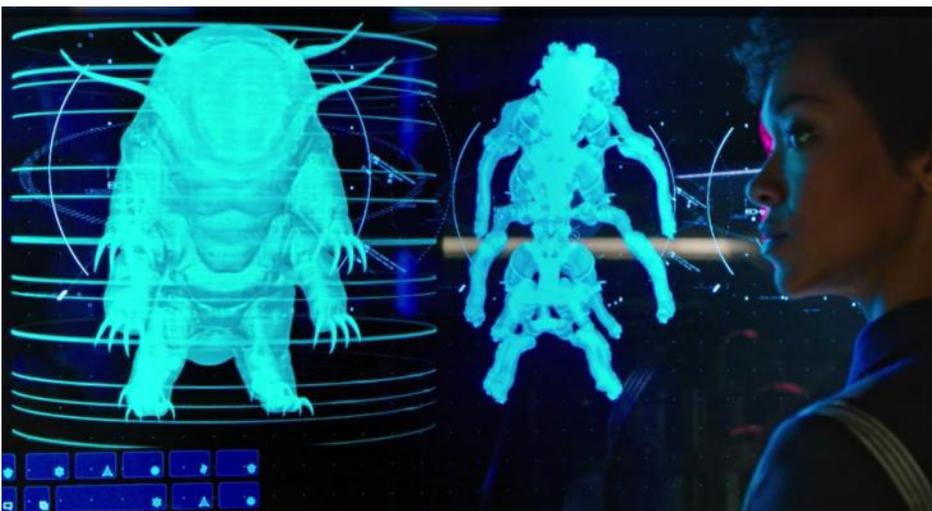
“Oy, what day is it? Do I even know what a day is? Now they need my help again. Every time they call upon me, it’s hurting me,” Ripper thought.



As it happened, Capt. Gabriel Lorca needed a rescue from the Klingons, and Ripper was needed for its last time directing Discovery. Yet, before doing so, Dr. Hugh Culber began to realize and accept that Ripper might be a sentient being and shared his opinions with both Burnham and Paul Stamets.

“Oh, really. Now they think I can think. Do they know I have feelings? That I hurt? Well, that’s it. After this last jump, I am taking a break. Don’t set an alarm or try to convince me to make another jump. I am going into my cryptobiosis state. Bye.”

The situation on board Discovery caused Paul Stamets to make a singular decision. By injecting himself with DNA from Ripper, he was able to take the creature’s place in navigating Discovery along the Mycelial Network. This freed Ripper from the de-





mands put upon it. In a final showing of mercy, Saru and Burnham did the kindest act possible and freed Ripper from its confines aboard the starship. With a supply of mycelial spores, Ripper was freed to travel to wherever it

wished to be in the Universe.

“Oh yeah, I’m done! Good-bye non-tardigrades, I am out of here!”

No one really knows what happened to Ripper after it was released from Discovery. Yet, it

has been said that a large tardigrade was seen on the beaches of Risa, sipping a tasty drink and taking in its freedom.

But this is all speculation.



**STEPHEN MIRKIN:** I first learned about science fiction the moment I was able to reach the on/off knob on my parents’ black-and-white TV set. Being born in 1956, I was there on Sept. 8, 1966 to watch the first episode of *Star Trek*. Since then, I have watched every TV series and every movie, and I only look forward to the next great *Star Trek* moment.

"The miracle is this: the more we share, the more we have."

-- *Leonard Nimoy*



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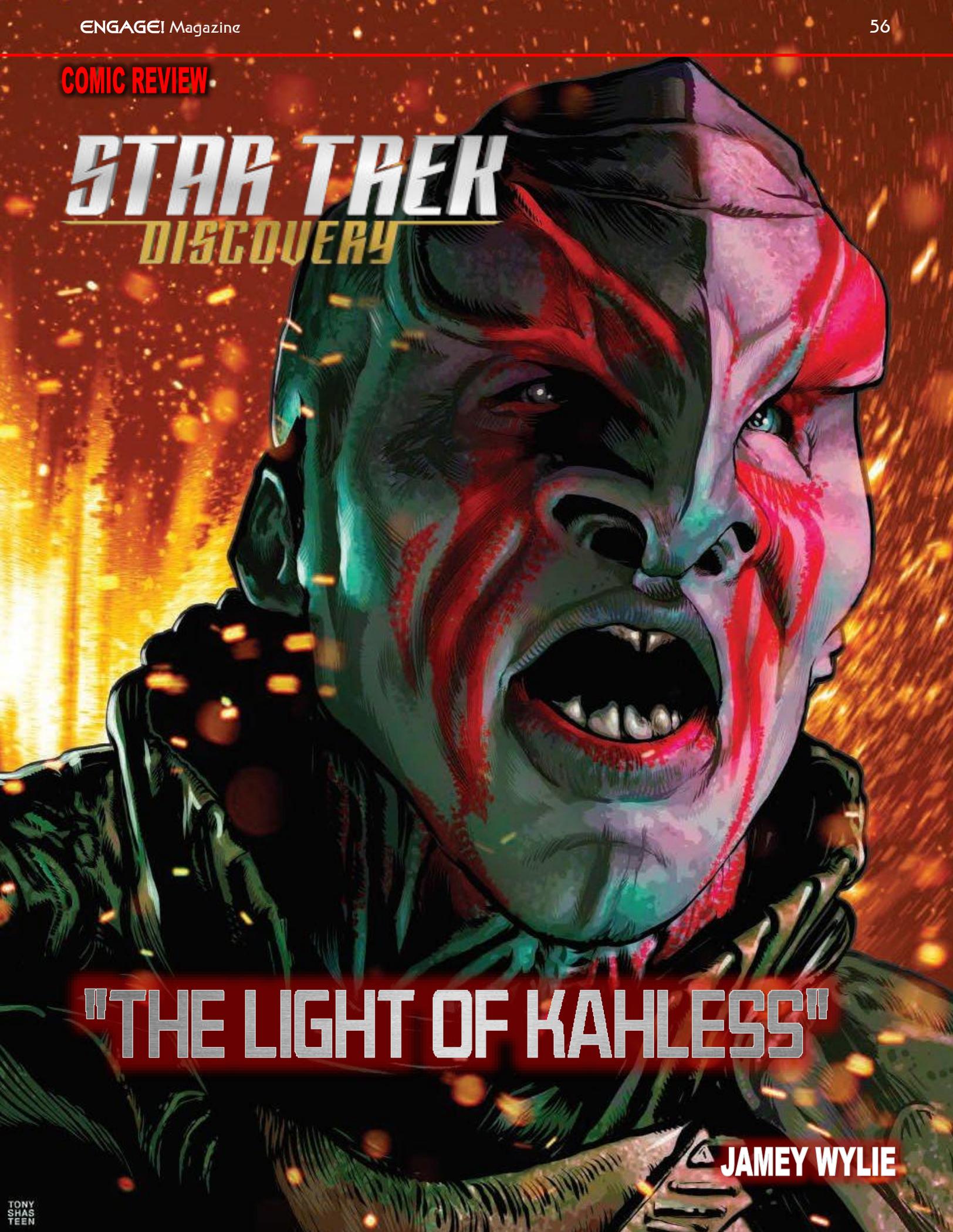


COMIC REVIEW

# STAR TREK DISCOVERY

"THE LIGHT OF KAHLESS"

JAMEY WYLIE



Very rarely is the first episode of a show the beginning of the story. Today's 8-12 episode season model of modern television has time constraints which require concise storytelling. Due to this fact a lot of the narrative is left out. However, through prequels we can experience the events that precipitate a story. For the creatives behind *Star Trek: Discovery*, the beginning of the series does not take place with the main cast, *Starfleet*, or shockingly not even with the *Enterprise*.

The beginning takes place in the life of the youngest son of an impoverished Klingon house on the Klingon homeworld. In the IDW comic series "Star Trek: Discovery — The Light of Kahless" Kirsten Beyer and Mike Johnson reveal how one young Klingon named T'Kuvma will grow up to become the visionary leader who will unite the Klingon empire, ignite a war, and set a starship named *Discovery* on its path.

IDW Comics has had the license for the franchise since 2006 and helped Paramount to launch the new era of *Star Trek*. IDW has promoted each of the new show releases with various prequels and tie-in stories that compliment what was revealed on screen. Since the release of *Discovery*, IDW has promoted the show through four mini-series and two one-shot comics. "Star Trek: Discovery — The Light of Kahless" was published in 2017 and served as a direct prequel to season one of the show.

Kirsten Beyer and Mike Johnson are a "Star Trek dream team." Beyer's *Trek* credentials are numerous; she authored sev-

eral *Voyager* novels and was a writer and producer for *Discovery*, *Strange New Worlds* and *Starfleet Academy*. She also recently co-wrote and produced the *Khan* podcast audio drama with David Mack. The other half of the dream team is Mike Johnson who is a mainstay in *Star Trek* comics and has been active in the franchise since 2009 with the release of the "Star Trek: Countdown" mini-series. In 2024 Beyer and Johnson teamed up to create the audio drama "Star Trek: Picard-No Man's Land."

The artist behind "The Light of Kahless" was no less talented than the writers. Tony Shasteen is known for his beautiful and realistic art inside and outside of the comic book industry. During his tenure at IDW Shasteen created some of the most gorgeous and visually stunning *Star Trek* covers. In "The Light of Kahless" Shasteen's art not only graces the cover but also every page and panel of the series and it is truly a visual treat that perfectly matches the tone of the narrative. Do yourself a favor and check out some of his amazing *Star Trek* artwork at <https://tonyshasteen.com/work/star-trek>.

"The Light of Kahless" is broken into two complementary plots. The secondary plot takes place after the Battle of the Binary Stars when T'Kuvma's disciples are trying to recover from his death (roughly between episodes two and four of *Discovery*).

Trapped in a crippled starship, T'Kuvma's followers are slowly starving and are having a crisis of faith. L'Rell, in order to boost Voq's morale and to restore

his confidence, begins to tell him a story of how a simple boy became a leader and a legend.

T'Kuvma was the youngest son of a once-great house that had forgotten its honorable past and had fallen into obscurity and degeneracy. While fleeing from his abusive brothers, T'Kuvma discovers a derelict starship. To his shock J'ula, his sister, and the peasants that lived on his family's estate were restoring the ship, in an effort to revive the lost honor of their fallen house. This revelation opens T'Kuvma's eyes to the reality of his present circumstances and serves as a catalyst for his desire to bring honor once again to his family and the Empire.

To seek the meaning of honor, young T'Kuvma travels to Boreth to study under the monks who preserved the teachings of Kahless, the mythical Klingon hero. Through trials and rigorous study, T'Kuvma proves himself to be a devoted follower of Kahless' teachings and a visionary. His visions are simple: he sees a light. Finding and igniting the Beacon of Kahless (which was prophesied long ago) becomes his pursuit and his life's great passion. To fulfill this quest, T'Kuvma takes his ancestral ship and a few followers and begins to look for the Beacon of Kahless. During his years of searching he fights against injustice in the empire and becomes a folk hero and messianic figure to the Klingon people. After years of discouragement and fruitless searching, T'Kuvma's followers are left with the realization that the Beacon of Kahless is not a mystical object but a person; T'Kuvma himself. The long years of searching

are over because T’Kuvma must become the torchbearer and light the way.

“The Light of Kahless” is an excellent example of the classic hero's journey. It is difficult to think of Klingons from this era as heroes, but T’Kuvma was the quintessential hero from a Klingon perspective. He sought to restore honor and unity to his people, and to protect them from the encroachment of the Federation. T’Kuvma’s desire for honor and unity were also backed up with courageous action which elevated him to the status of a Klingon hero.

“The Light of Kahless” does not settle for simplistic narrative tropes where the conflict is always good versus evil, black and white. This series demonstrates that not all antagonists are monsters and not all heroes fit the Starfleet mold. This portrayal of T’Kuvma as a noble and selfless being allows him to move beyond the role of a two dimensional, mustache-twirling villain. This nuance adds depth, interest, and gravitas to a character that was not served well in the opening episodes of *Discovery*. Making T’Kuvma a more fully realized character is key to why “The Light of Kahless” is a great prequel to *Discovery*.

Beyond being just another example of a hero's journey, “The Light of Kahless” is a vehicle for exploring ethical/social issues in classic *Star Trek* fashion. *Star Trek* is always at its best when it unashamedly examines big ideas, provides social commentary, and looks at the universe through a philosophical lens. Timeless themes such as: societal corrup-

tion, class struggle, honor, duty, and faith are all touched upon in this comic book.

Even though the Klingons and the ships may look different, the underlying message of this incarnation of *Star Trek* is true to the positive ideology of the franchise. Gene Roddenberry, as a humanist, believed in the potential of mankind to create a better world. In a 1986 interview with “Good Morning America” Roddenberry was quoted as saying “There is a tomorrow — we humans are going to make it — we're something...” The moral of “The Light of Kahless” is a reflection of this worldview because it is about learning to believe in our inherent greatness and potential to shape the future.

There are many things to recommend this story to fans of *Star Trek* or simply fans of great comic literature, such as superb writing, strong character development, and beautiful art. Beyer is an inspired storyteller and Johnson is a master of translating great stories into the medium of comic books. This combination is what makes the narrative of “The Light of Kahless” so fantastic. The story is told with a perfect balance of dialogue and action to keep the reader engaged and the plot moving at a satisfactory pace. There was no wasted space in the narrative and nothing felt dull or unnecessary. It delivers on the promise of setting up the events that led to *Discovery*. This series fills in the missing pieces of T’Kuvma’s character arc. We are left feeling satisfied with his personal evolution from a mere boy to a martyred hero by the end of *Discovery*

episode two. Shasteen’s art compliments the story perfectly. The artwork from cover to cover is stunning; the characters are realistic, the images are dynamic, the panel layout flows from scene to scene like a movie, and the coloring is very vivid. IDW always delivers a quality comic but

*The Light of Kahless* is on another level.

I happily rate this miniseries 5 del-tas!



**JAMEY L. WYLIE:** Jamey is a lifelong lover of all things *Trek*, especially the media of novels and comics. He is currently a professional school counselor and bi-vocational pastor. Jamey is married to Amanda, who enables his nerdiness.

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**POEM**

# ODE TO GRUDGE



**MARK SICKLE**

# ODE TO GRUDGE

Oh Grudge, with regal, silent gaze,  
Queen of the starship's humming maze,  
Whiskered sovereign, fur so fine,  
You rule Book's heart and warp through time.

Aloof, inscrutable, proud and wise,  
A universe reflected in your eyes,  
Unbothered by Klingon or cosmic plight,  
You curl in calm through endless night.

Not "just a cat," as mortals claim—  
You're Empress, goddess, soul untamed.  
A purr, a glare, a languid stretch—  
On Discovery's deck, you're always top fetch.

So here's to Grudge, in starry repose,  
More mystery than any spore-drive knows.  
Among the stars, you reign apart—  
The furry monarch of every heart.



# BOOK REVIEW



**MARK SICKLE**

## Charting Her Own Course:

### A Review of *Star Trek: Discovery* – *The Way to the Stars* by Una McCormack

If there's one thing *Star Trek: Discovery* has done exceptionally well, it's giving us characters who feel real, vulnerable, and utterly relatable. Among them, Sylvia Tilly stands out — a brilliant, awkward, endlessly optimistic cadet who quickly became a fan favorite. In “The Way to the Stars,” acclaimed author Una McCormack invites readers to step into Tilly's world before Starfleet, revealing the formative struggles and small victories that shaped her into the ensign we've come to love.

#### A Coming-of-Age Tale in the Federation

Set in Tilly's teenage years, the novel is more than an origin story; it's a heartfelt coming-of-age tale set against the backdrop of *Star Trek's* utopian future. Tilly lives in the shadow of her accomplished, demanding mother, Siobhan Tilly, and is enrolled in an elite preparatory school where she feels distinctly out of place. Social expectations, parental pressure, and her own anxieties weigh heavily on her, and after a crisis at school, she flees — both literally and figuratively — on a journey that will define her sense of self. What follows is a trek across the Federation, from glittering spaceports to bustling orbital habitats. Along the way, Tilly encounters an array of diverse characters — students, mentors, and everyday citizens — each offering new perspectives. The story is less about external adventure and more



about Tilly's internal voyage: learning to listen to her own instincts, to challenge the path laid out for her, and to imagine a future she wants rather than one she feels obligated to pursue.

#### Tilly Unfiltered: Heart, Humor, and Humanity

What makes this novel truly shine is McCormack's deft handling of Tilly's voice. Every page rings with Tilly's signature blend of nervous energy, humor, and deep empathy. Her insecurities are front and center — she's prone to self-doubt, awkward around her peers, and sometimes overwhelmed by the world's expectations. But what emerges is a portrait of a young woman whose heart, intellect, and compassion are her greatest strengths.

The relationship between Tilly and her mother is at the novel's emotional core. Siobhan is a force of nature — brilliant, exacting, and, at times, intimidatingly unsentimental. Their dynamic is fraught, with Tilly yearning for approval but often feeling misunderstood. Through their evolving relationship, McCormack explores themes of generational conflict,

the burden of parental ambition, and the courage it takes to chart one's own course. Their eventual, hard-won understanding provides the novel's most moving moments.

#### The Federation in a New Light

While “The Way to the Stars” is a personal journey, it's also a refreshingly grounded look at life in the 23rd-century Federation. Removed from the bridge of a starship, the novel explores what it means to grow up in a society where opportunity abounds, but so do pressures to excel. McCormack paints a world that's technologically advanced, yet still filled with familiar challenges: social hierarchies, academic anxiety, and the universal quest for belonging.

Supporting characters — whether fellow students or adults working in starports — are drawn with warmth and nuance, adding depth to Tilly's world. Each interaction, from awkward dorm conversations to heartfelt mentorship, helps Tilly (and the reader) see the many facets of Federation life.



### Trek Values, Quietly Powerful

At its core, “The Way to the Stars” embodies the optimism and empathy that have always defined *Star Trek*. Tilly’s journey is one of self-acceptance, resilience, and kindness — a reminder that greatness isn’t always about saving the galaxy, but sometimes about finding the confidence to be yourself. McCormack excels at weaving in these *Trek* values without ever feeling preachy. The result is a novel that’s both inspiring and deeply comforting, especially for anyone who’s ever felt like a misfit.

The prose is crisp, accessible, and laced with humor. McCormack’s experience with *Star Trek* novels is evident — she knows how to balance introspection with forward momentum, and longtime fans will appreciate the continuity nods and Easter eggs. Yet the book stands entirely on its own, making it an inviting

entry point for new readers or those less familiar with *Discovery*.

### Final Verdict: A Quiet Triumph

“The Way to the Stars” is not a tale of galactic stakes or epic space battles. Instead, it is a gentle, hopeful story about the formative moments that shape who we are. It is, at heart, a love letter to anyone who has ever felt out of place — and a reminder that even the most unlikely dreamers can find their way to the stars.

For *Star Trek* fans, the novel enriches the backstory of one of *Discovery*’s most beloved characters. For everyone else, it’s a moving coming-of-age novel with universal resonance. Una McCormack’s heartfelt storytelling and deep empathy for her protagonist make “The Way to the Stars” a shining addition to the *Trek* literary universe.

### Recommended for:

- *Star Trek: Discovery* fans
- Readers who love coming-of-age stories
- Anyone who’s ever felt like an outsider looking for their place in the world

**Rating:** 4.5/5 Deltas

*“The Way to the Stars” by Una McCormack is available now in print, ebook, and audio formats. Boldly pick it up — you’ll be glad you did.*



**MARK SICKLE:** Mark Sickle is an Egyptologist (archaeologist) by day, diehard Trekkie all the time. Founder of the Star Trek Family. Lives in West Virginia with his beautiful wife Lisa, puppies Odo, Kira, Wesley and Jadzia; and kitties Nala, Cymba, Cena, Elleadora and Aeolia.



# CELEBRATING *STAR TREK* 60



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Leadership and Agency from Burnham to Georgiou  
**WOMEN ON THE BRIDGE**

**MARK SICKLE**

## How *Star Trek: Discovery's* Powerful Female Characters Are Shaping the Future of *Trek*

Since its inception in 1966, *Star Trek* has challenged the status quo, using its science-fiction canvas to imagine a future of equality, justice and hope. Yet, even as *The Original Series* broke ground with Nichelle Nichols' Lt. Uhura, women's leadership on the bridge often took a backseat to male captains and commanders. Five decades later, *Star Trek: Discovery* has not only redefined the franchise's approach to storytelling, but also fundamentally shifted the balance of power and agency for women in the *Trek* universe. Through complex, dynamic characters like Michael Burnham, Philippa Georgiou, Sylvia Tilly, Number One and an array of diverse supporting women, *Discovery* has set a new standard for representation, leadership, and narrative depth.

This feature explores how *Discovery's* women have claimed their place on the bridge, the impact of their agency on *Star Trek's* legacy, and what it means for the future — not just of the franchise, but of science fiction storytelling itself.

### Breaking the Mold: The Evolution of Women's Roles in *Star Trek*

Before delving into *Discovery's* dynamic women, it's important to understand the context. *Star Trek* has always aspired to diversity and inclusion, yet *The Original Series* reflected the limitations of its era. Majel Barrett's Number One, the first officer in the unaired 1965 pilot "The Cage," was deemed "too intelligent and

assertive" by network executives and replaced in the main series by Mr. Spock. Lt. Uhura, played by Nichelle Nichols, was a communications officer and one of the first Black women with a recurring television role, but rarely drove the plot or commanded the bridge.

Subsequent series moved the needle: *The Next Generation's* Beverly Crusher and Deanna Troi, *Deep Space Nine's* Kira Nerys and Jadzia Dax, *Voyager's* trailblazing Captain Kathryn Janeway, and *Enterprise's* T'Pol all made significant strides. Yet, Starfleet's highest ranks and most pivotal decisions remained largely the domain of male characters.

*Star Trek: Discovery*, premiering in 2017, shattered this paradigm. From its first scene — Commander Michael Burnham and Captain Philippa Georgiou striding across a desert planet — *Discovery* signaled that this was a new era, one where women would not just participate in the story, but lead it.

### Michael Burnham: Starfleet's Reluctant Revolutionary

At the heart of *Discovery* is Michael Burnham (Sonequa Mar-

tin-Green), the first Black woman to headline a *Star Trek* series. Burnham's journey is one of growth, resilience, and redemption. Raised on Vulcan by Sarek and Amanda, she embodies both the logic of her adoptive culture and the emotional complexity of her human heritage. More than any previous *Trek* protagonist, Burnham's arc is defined by struggle and transformation.

Burnham enters the series as a science officer under Captain Georgiou, but her fateful decision to mutiny in an attempt to prevent war with the Klingons results in her disgrace and imprisonment. This act of rebellion — rooted in conviction and fear — sets her apart from previous *Star Trek* leads. Burnham's subsequent quest for redemption, her willingness to challenge authority and her intellectual courage make her a richly layered character.

What distinguishes Burnham is her agency. She is not simply reacting to events, but actively shaping them, for better or worse. Her decisions — whether starting a war, sacrificing herself for the crew, or supporting the Federation's highest ideals —





drive the narrative. As the series progresses, Burnham's leadership style evolves: she learns to trust herself and others, to balance logic and empathy and ultimately, to accept the mantle of captain. Her journey is emblematic of a new kind of *Star Trek* hero — one who finds strength not in perfection, but in vulnerability and growth.

Burnham's impact extends beyond the screen. Sonequa Martin-Green's casting and performance have been lauded by critics and fans alike, inspiring a new generation of viewers who see themselves reflected in her story. In interviews, Martin-Green has spoken about the responsibility and honor of leading the franchise, saying, "I hope Burnham's



journey resonates with anyone who believes in second chances and the power of forgiveness."

#### **Philippa Georgiou: Authority, Complexity and the Mirror's Edge**

If Burnham is *Discovery's* heart, Philippa Georgiou (Michelle Yeoh) is its compass — though not always in the direction one might expect. First introduced as the wise and compassionate captain of the USS *Shenzhou*, Georgiou is a mentor and maternal figure to Burnham. Her tragic death in the opening episodes is a seismic moment, setting Burnham's journey in motion.

But *Star Trek*, with its penchant for alternate realities, brings Yeoh back as Emperor Georgiou, the ruthless, cunning ruler of the Terran Empire in the Mirror Universe. This dual role allows Yeoh to explore two sides of the same coin: the idealistic Starfleet leader and the pragmatic, Machiavellian survivor. Both versions of Geor-

giou are women of extraordinary capability and presence, but their methods and values are worlds apart.

Emperor Georgiou's arc is one of the most fascinating in *Discovery*. Initially an antagonist — brutal, manipulative and unapologetically self-serving — she gradually adapts to life in the Prime Universe, forming unlikely bonds with Burnham and the crew. Through her, the series interrogates themes of morality, redemption and the possibility of change. Georgiou challenges Starfleet's ideals, often acting as a devil's advocate, but ultimately reveals a capacity for growth and sacrifice.

Michelle Yeoh's performance imbues both Georgious with gravitas, charisma, and unpredictability. She is, by turns, mentor, adversary, antihero and ally — a testament to *Discovery's* commitment to writing complex female characters. The popularity of Georgiou led to plans for a *Sec-*



tion 31 spinoff, further cementing her as one of the most compelling figures in modern *Trek*.

**Sylvia Tilly: The Everywoman’s Rise**

Not all leaders are born with rank or pedigree. Sylvia Tilly (Mary Wiseman), introduced as an awkward, earnest cadet, is *Discovery*’s everywoman. Tilly’s journey from nervous ensign to acting first officer is a testament to the series’ belief in the value of potential and the power of self-discovery.

Tilly’s strengths lie in her authenticity, empathy and intellectual curiosity. She is ambitious, but never at the expense of her principles. Her relationships with Burnham, Stamets and Saru provide emotional grounding for the series. Tilly’s growth is not without setbacks — she doubts herself, makes mistakes and struggles with imposter syndrome — but her willingness to confront these

challenges head-on makes her both relatable and inspiring.

In key episodes, Tilly is given opportunities to lead, innovate and save the day. Whether she’s devising a scientific solution in the heat of crisis or offering a listening ear to a troubled crewmate, Tilly demonstrates that leadership comes in many forms. Her promotion to acting first officer in Season 3 is both a narrative and symbolic victory: evidence that Starfleet’s future is shaped not just by the bold and the brilliant, but by those who lead with heart.

**Number One, Admiral Cornwell and Women of the Wider Universe**

*Discovery* also pays homage to *Star Trek*’s legacy by reintroducing and expanding the roles of classic female characters. Number One (Rebecca Romijn), originally portrayed by Majel Barrett and sidelined in the 1960s, is given new life as Captain Pike’s trust-

ed first officer on the Enterprise. Cool, competent and unflappable, this Number One is a model of efficiency and quiet authority. The series teases her mysterious past and unique personality quirks, setting the stage for her expanded





role in *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*.

Admiral Katrina Cornwell (Jayne Brook) is another standout. As a high-ranking Starfleet official navigating the complexities of war, politics and personal sacrifice, Cornwell embodies the burdens and complexities of command. Unlike the often distant admirals of earlier *Trek*, Cornwell is hands-on, emotionally invested and unafraid to challenge her peers. Her ultimate sacrifice in season two is a moving testament to the cost of leadership.

*Discovery's* commitment to female leadership extends beyond the bridge. Supporting characters such as Commander Nhan, Airiam, Dr. Tracy Pollard and Osyraa, the formidable Emerald Chain leader, demonstrate the breadth and depth of women's roles in the galaxy. They are scientists, engineers, security chiefs, diplomats and antagonists — each with

agency, motivations and arcs that transcend tokenism.

**Agency and Intersectionality: Diversity in Leadership**

What sets *Discovery* apart is not just the presence of women in positions of authority, but the intersectional diversity of those women. The main cast features Black, Asian, LGBTQ+ and plus-size women, reflecting the real world's spectrum of identities and experiences. This diversity is not just visual; it's woven into the narrative, influencing the decisions, relationships and leadership styles of the characters.

Burnham's identity as a Black woman is central to her journey, shaping her interactions and the expectations placed upon her. Georgiou's Malaysian Chinese heritage, and Yeoh's own international stardom, bring global resonance to her character. Tilly's openness about her neurodiver-

gence and body image further expands the conversation about who belongs on the bridge.

Moreover, *Discovery* foregrounds LGBTQ+ women and non-binary characters in meaningful ways. Jett Reno (Tig Notaro), the ship's sardonic engineer, is openly lesbian, while Adira Tal (Blu del Barrio) is the franchise's first non-binary character, bringing new layers of representation and storytelling to the *Trek* universe.



**Leadership Styles: Collaboration,**

## Empathy and the New Federation Ethos

The diversity of *Discovery's* female characters is matched by the diversity of their leadership styles. Where previous *Trek* captains often embodied a single archetype — Kirk's swagger, Picard's diplomacy, Sisko's resolve — *Discovery's* women lead in a variety of ways.

Burnham's leadership is marked by empathy, intellectual rigor, and a willingness to challenge authority. She listens, learns, and adapts, often putting the needs of others before her own ambition. Georgiou, by contrast, leads through strength, cunning, and a deep understanding of power dynamics. Tilly's style is collaborative and emotionally intelligent, forging connections among her crewmates and encouraging others to realize their potential.

These variations reflect a broader shift in how leadership is portrayed in science fiction. No longer is authority defined solely by command presence or decisiveness; it is equally about vulnerability, listening, and building consensus. *Discovery's* bridge is a microcosm of this new ethos, where diverse voices are not only present, but pivotal to the mission's success.

## Impact on Star Trek's Legacy — and Beyond

*Discovery's* bold approach to female leadership has resonated far beyond its own narrative. In interviews and fan conventions, viewers routinely cite the importance of seeing women at the center of Starfleet's future. Young

fans — especially girls and women of color — describe Burnham, Georgiou, and Tilly as role models, both for their competence and their complexity.

The show's influence is visible in the larger *Star Trek* universe as well. *Strange New Worlds* continues the legacy with Number One, Nyota Uhura, La'an Noonien-Singh, and nurse Christine Chapel all in prominent roles. *Star Trek: Picard* features Jean-Luc Picard's crew led by accomplished women such as Raffi Musiker and Seven of Nine. Even the animated *Star Trek: Prodigy* and *Lower Decks* center strong, diverse female characters.

Beyond *Star Trek*, *Discovery's* impact can be seen in the broader landscape of science fiction and fantasy, where women are increasingly given space to lead, struggle, and evolve as fully realized protagonists.

## Challenges, Critiques and the Road Ahead

While *Discovery's* achievements are significant, they have not been without controversy or critique. Some fans have pushed back against the show's departure from tradition, its complex serialized storytelling, or the prominence of women and people of color in leading roles. Online debates have sometimes turned toxic, underscoring the ongoing challenges of representation and inclusion in media.

Yet, the show's creative team and cast have met these challenges with resolve. Showrunner Michelle Paradise, herself an LGBTQ+ woman, has spoken about the responsibility of "telling

stories that matter, with characters who reflect the audience."

The writers' room, one of the most diverse in franchise history, continues to push boundaries while honoring *Trek's* core values.

The road ahead is bright. With the continued success of *Discovery*, *Star Trek* is poised to remain at the forefront of science fiction's ongoing evolution.

## Conclusion: Boldly Leading the Way

*Star Trek: Discovery* has redefined what it means to serve — and to lead — on the bridge of a starship. Through Michael Burnham's resilience, Georgiou's complexity, Tilly's authenticity and the strength of countless others, the series has ushered in a new era for *Trek* and for science fiction as a whole. No longer confined to the sidelines or supporting roles, women in *Discovery* are captains of their own destiny, shaping the future of the Federation and inspiring audiences across the galaxy.

And with women at the helm, the final frontier has never looked more promising.



**MARK SICKLE:** Mark Sickle is an Egyptologist (archaeologist) by day, diehard Trekkie all the time. Founder of the Star Trek Family. Lives in West Virginia with his beautiful wife Lisa, puppies Odo, Kira, Wesley and Jadzia; and kitties Nala, Cymba, Cena, Elleadora and Aeolia.



# NEW WORLDS, NEW CIVILIZATIONS



**MARK SICKLE**

Ever since *Star Trek's* earliest missions, the spirit of exploration has been its beating heart. *Star Trek: Discovery* carries that legacy forward, plunging boldly into uncharted narrative space with new civilizations, cosmic anomalies and lifeforms both wondrous and strange. In *Discovery*, the final frontier is more vibrant and unpredictable than ever, thanks to a host of innovative alien species and awe-inspiring stellar phenomena.

**A New Age of Discovery**

By leaping from the pre-*Original Series* era to the far-off 32nd century, *Discovery's* writers and designers have been freer than ever to conjure new species, challenge the boundaries of science fiction, and reimagine what it means to “seek out new life and new civilizations.” Their work revitalizes Gene Roddenberry’s founding vision, making the universe feel both limitless and deeply interconnected.

Let’s tour the most unforgettable aliens *Discovery* brings to *Star Trek's* canon, along with the cosmic wonders that shape their stories.

**MEET THE NEW LIFE**



Kelpiens

**Kelpiens**

**First Contact:** Season 1

Starfleet’s own Saru introduces us to the Kelpiens, a species evolved as prey on Kaminar. Their heightened senses and threat ganglia once defined them by fear, but Saru’s journey — and Kaminar’s revolution — unshackle the Kelpiens, transforming them into explorers and leaders. The Kelpien arc explores trauma, evolution and the courage to redefine destiny.

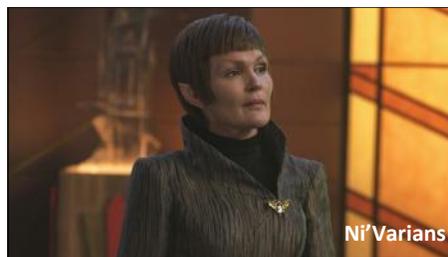


Ba’ul

**Ba’ul**

**First Contact:** Season 2

The Ba’ul are Kaminar’s shadow-dwelling, technologically advanced overlords. Once victims of predation by Kelpiens, they use fear as a tool of control. Their oily, liquid-black forms and eerie technology make them some of *Discovery's* most visually memorable antagonists.



Ni’Varians

**Ni’Varians (Vulcan-Romulan Unification)**

**First Contact:** Season 3

Once known as Vulcans, the people of Ni’Var now represent the long-sought unification of Vulcans and Romulans, blending logic with emotion. Their society

wrestles with reconciliation, tradition and identity, providing a nuanced backdrop for Capt. Michael Burnham’s diplomatic missions and the Federation’s evolving ideals.



Kwejian

**Kwejian**

**First Contact:** Season 3

The species of Cleveland “Book” Booker, Kwejian is a lush, empathic world whose people share a psychic connection with native fauna. Attuned to nature and fiercely protective of their ecosystem, the Kwejian are tragically targeted by the Emerald Chain and later devastated by the DMA. Their plight brings environmental themes and personal



Tardigrade (next page)

stakes to the forefront of *Discovery's* story.

**Tardigrade (“Ripper”)**

First Contact: Season 1

A gigantic, water bear-like lifeform discovered in the mycelial network, Ripper enables the spore drive’s jumps through space. Intelligent, sensitive and ultimately freed by the crew, Ripper’s saga is a classic *Star Trek* tale of scientific wonder and ethical responsibility.



**Xahean**

First Contact: Short Treks, Season 2

Homeworld of Me Hani Ika Hali Ka Po (“Queen Po”), Xaheans are diminutive but brilliant. Po’s invention — recrystallizing dilithium — shakes up the galaxy’s energy economy, showing that even the smallest worlds can have galactic impact. Her friendship with Ens. Sylvia Tilly also highlights *Discovery's* theme of empathy across cultures.



**Betelgeusian**

First Contact: Season 2 (23rd century) and Season 3 (32nd Century)

First glimpsed in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, Betelgeusians return in *Discovery* in multiple story arcs. The first is when Cmdr. Jett Reno keeps a Betelgeusian named Valentine alive by hooking up his heart to a dead Bolian until their rescue by the USS *Discovery* in 2257. Later, Betelgeusians are part of the diverse 32nd-century Starfleet, showing a renewed presence on Federation starship bridges and crews not seen on screen since the time period of *TMP*. Their distinct insectoid appearance and presence on the bridge signal a new era of inclusivity within the Federation.



**Saurian**

First Contact: Season 2

Linus, the Saurian with a penchant for sneezing at the worst possible moments, is *Discovery's* comic relief and a callback to a species first mentioned in *The Original Series* and popping up in other *Trek* series, as well. His lizard-like features and good humor make him a fan favorite among the *Discovery* crew.

**Osnullus**

First Contact: Season 2



Amphibious, androgynous Osnullus appear as Starfleet officers, notable for their wide-set eyes and smooth, aquatic features. Though their roles are mostly silent, their design stands out in *Discovery's* bridge ensemble.



**Trill (Reimagined)**

First Contact: Season 3

While not new to *Trek*, *Discovery's* Trill arc (through Adira Tal) breaks ground by depicting a human successfully hosting a symbiont and being embraced by Trill society. The story redefines symbiosis and celebrates chosen family and identity.

**Species 10-C**

First Contact: Season 4

*Discovery's* most alien aliens are colossal, non-humanoid, hive-minded and communicate through hydrocarbon phero-



mones and advanced math. First contact with 10-C is an exercise in radical empathy and patience, as the crew strives to avert disaster and build understanding.



**Emerald Chain (Orions & Andorians)**

**First Contact:** Season 3

The syndicate led by Osyraa fuses classic *Trek* species — the Orions and Andorians — into a new threat. With familiar green skin for the Orions and blue antennae for the Andorians, the Emerald Chain explores themes of power, exploitation and resistance.



**Qowat Milat (Romulan Sisterhood)**

**First Contact:** Season 3

A radical, all-female order of Romulan warrior-nuns, the Qowat Milat champion absolute candor. Their inclusion in *Discovery* bridges classic *Trek* lore and the show’s focus on unique, principled cultures.



**Other Notables**

**Lurians:** Blink-and-you’ll-miss-them cameos; Morn’s kin from *DS9* are still found in the future.

**Cardassians, Bajorans, Andorians, Kellerun, Tellarites and Ferengi:**

Reimagined and visually updated, each familiar species has new societal roles and dilemmas in the 32nd century.

**NEW THEMATIC FRONTIERS:**

**What New Life Teaches Us**

*Discovery’s* new species and phenomena aren’t just window dressing — they drive the show’s emotional and philosophical core. The Kelpien and Ba’ul saga is a meditation on the cycles of fear, oppression and liberation. The mycelial network’s living web explores the idea that all existence is connected. First contact with Species 10-C challenges the

crew to embrace radical empathy, moving beyond language, form or even traditional morality to prevent catastrophe.

The show’s portrayal of the Federation’s decline and re-birth in the 32nd century, set against the backdrop of The Burn and DMA, provides a hopeful allegory for rebuilding community after trauma and division. New aliens — whether friend or foe — force the crew (and the audience) to reconsider what it means to be “the other,” to communicate, and to coexist.

**A Legacy of Imagination**

*Star Trek: Discovery* proves that the universe’s wonders are far from exhausted. With every new species and cosmic marvel, the show expands not just the boundaries of space but of empathy, possibility and hope. In *Discovery*, the final frontier isn’t just a place — it’s a promise: that there is always more to learn, more to explore, and more ways to understand one another.

As long as *Discovery* continues its voyage, the spirit of boldly going will remain alive — for the crew, for the Federation and for all who look to the stars and dream.

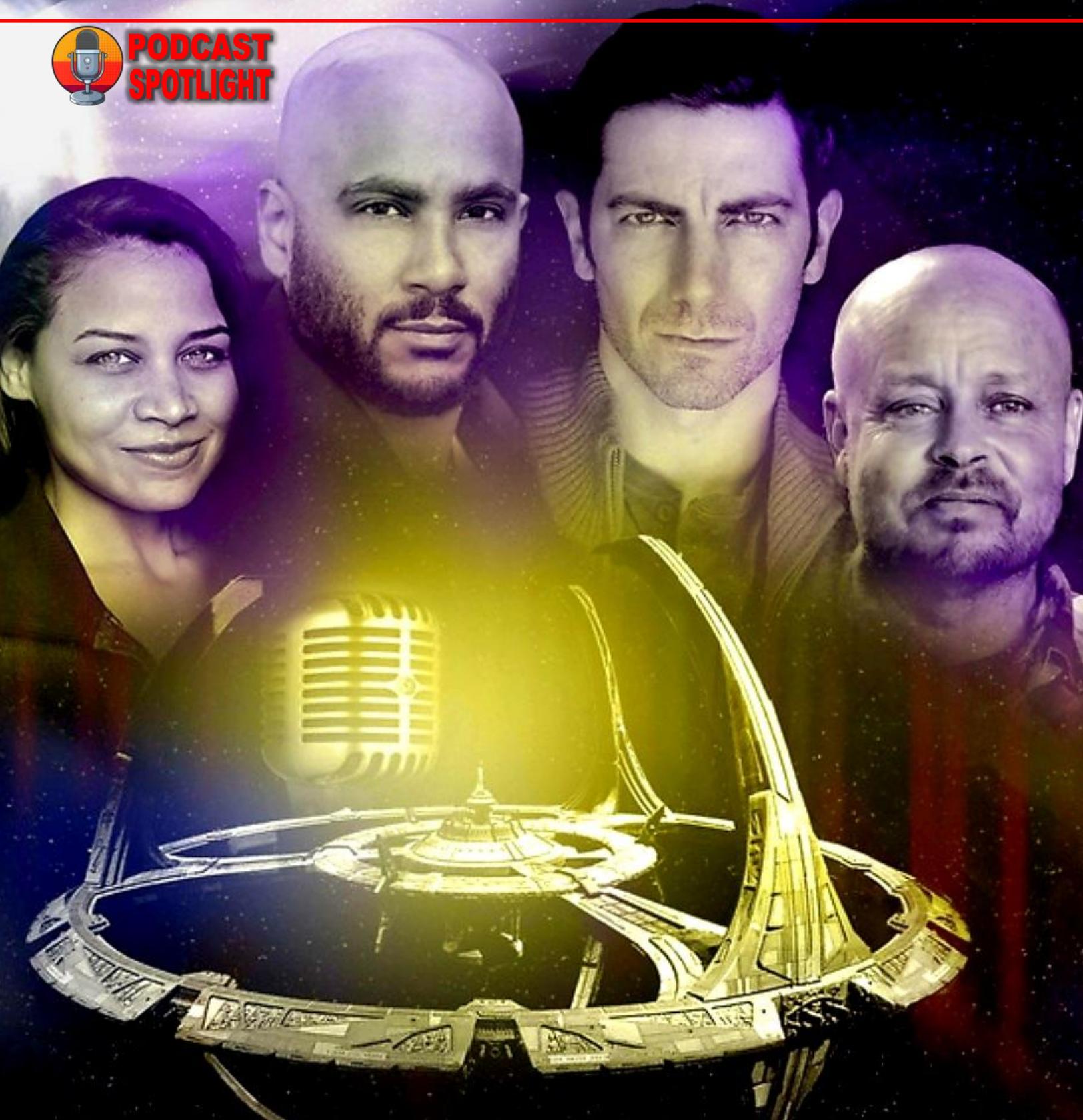


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**PODCAST  
SPOTLIGHT**



# THE 7TH RULE

**CARRIE SCHWENT**

## Podcast Spotlight:

**The 7<sup>th</sup> Rule, A *Star Trek* Podcast**  
**Hosts: Cirroc Lofton and Ryan T. Husk**

The 7th Rule is a *Star Trek* podcast created and conceptualized by Aron Eisenberg, with Cirroc Lofton and Ryan T. Husk. It debuted in January 2019. They have reviewed every episode of *Deep Space Nine* and are currently discussing all of *The Next Generation*. They are also watching some of *The Original Series* and every new *Star Trek* episode that comes out. After they review each episode of *TNG*, there is a 30-45 minute "Free For All" segment in which they have a little fun, talk about the episode, and ask silly questions

The 7<sup>th</sup> Rule podcast can be found on YouTube for the video version and the audio version wherever you find your podcasts.

Let's get to know the hosts of this podcast! I asked Cirroc Lofton and Ryan T. Husk a series of questions. I included Aron Eisenberg's widow, Malissa Longo, who answered not only for herself, but also for how Aron might have answered.

Now, for the questions!

Favorite *Star Trek* episode you reviewed?

**Cirroc:** "Far Beyond the Stars" (*DS9*)

**Ryan:** "Explorers" (*DS9*)

**Malissa:** "In the Cards/ Take Me Out to the Holosuite" (*DS9*)

**Aron:** "Duet" (*DS9*)

Is there a series or episode you haven't looked at that you'd like to?

**Cirroc:** *Voyager*

**Ryan:** *Voyager* and *Enterprise*

**Malissa:** Would like to see Cirroc watch *Enterprise*

**Aron:** Wish he could have finished *DS9*, and his opinions of the new series

What iteration of *Star Trek* would you love to live in?

**Cirroc:** *DS9* will always be home, but would love to live on the Enterprise-D

**Ryan:** *DS9* would be fun, but the Enterprise-D is home

**Malissa and Aron:** *DS9*, very easy answer

What is your favorite alien race?

**Cirroc:** Bajorans, Ferengi. Would love to be a Changeling

**Ryan:** Bolians, Cardassians

**Malissa:** Lanthanites, El-Aurians, and Trill

**Aron:** Ferengi

What is your least favorite alien race?

**Cirroc:** Whatever race Armus is

**Ryan:** The humans from "A Piece Of The Action"

**Malissa:** Vidiians, Antedians

**Aron:** Malissa is not sure he had one

Who is your favorite character?

**Cirroc:** Captain Sisko

**Ryan:** Dukat and Weyoun

**Malissa:** Kira

**Aron:** Odo

Who is your least favorite character?

**Cirroc and Ryan:** Kai Winn

**Malissa:** Lore

**Aron:** Tumak (*DS9* episode "Sanctuary")

If you had a replicator, what food/drink would you order?

**Cirroc:** Raktajinos

**Ryan:** The best vegetarian pizza

**Malissa:** Chocolate Cake

**Aron:** Instead of food, either a soccer ball or a Ferengi whip

Favorite Treknobabble?

**Cirroc:** Self Sealing Stem Bolts

**Ryan:** Recalibrate

**Malissa:** "From Little Green Men," "Right here, by this blue blob"

**Aron:** Self Sealing Stem Bolts

Least favorite Treknobabble?

**Cirroc:** "The knitter isn't working"

**Ryan:** Doesn't have one

**Aron:** Self Sealing Stem Bolts.



**CARRIE SCHWENT:** I am a crazy crafter, a crazy Chicago Cubs fan, and crazy for *Star Trek*. I am married, with one son and three cats (two of them are Jake and Nog).



"KEEP YOUR EARS OPEN!"

THE



RULE

A STAR TREK PODCAST



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STEP INTO YOUR FUTURE



**PERSPECTIVES**

# INFINITE RESPECT: WHAT STAR TREK TAUGHT ME ABOUT ALLYSHIP AND BLACK REPRESENTATION



**MARK SICKLE**

As a lifelong *Star Trek* fan, I've often marveled at the franchise's ability to imagine a future that's brighter, bolder and more inclusive than our present. But it wasn't until I began reflecting on *Star Trek* through the lens of Black History Month that I truly understood how much the show had shaped my perspective on diversity, allyship and the importance of representation — both on the screen and in the world around me.

**First Contact: Meeting Uhura and the Power of Representation**

My earliest memory of *Star Trek* is sitting beside my mother, watching reruns of *The Original Series* on a Thursday night with TV dinners. I was mesmerized by the starships and the strange new worlds, but I was also struck — though I couldn't fully articulate it at the time — by the diversity of the crew. Lieutenant Uhura, portrayed by Nichelle Nichols, stood out to me. She was calm, brilliant and commanded respect on the bridge. As a young child, I didn't yet grasp how radical her presence was. But I knew she belonged there as much as anyone else.

As I learned more about Nichols' story — her groundbreaking role, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s encouragement for her to stay on the show, and her inspiration to future astronauts like Dr. Mae Jemison — I realized Uhura wasn't just a character. She was a symbol of possibility for Black viewers and a lesson for the rest of us: the future is for everyone.



**Lessons from Sisko, Geordi and Burnham**

As *Star Trek* expanded, so did its tapestry of characters. *The Next Generation* introduced me to Geordi La Forge, played by LeVar Burton, whose intelligence and kindness broke stereotypes and showed that leadership and innovation come in every color. But it was *Deep Space Nine's* Captain Benjamin Sisko, portrayed by Avery Brooks, who left the deepest impression on me. Sisko wasn't just a commander — he was a father, a friend, a spiritual figure and a man wrestling with history and legacy. His journey was layered and real, and it opened my eyes to the power of storytelling to reflect and honor Black experiences.

More recently, Michael Burnham, played by Sonequa Martin-Green in *Star Trek: Discovery*, has carried this torch forward. Watching her navigate adversity and lead with empathy and strength has reminded me that representation isn't just about vis-

ibility — it's about celebrating the full complexity of Black lives and leadership.

**Star Trek's Challenge: See, Listen and Act**

*Star Trek* didn't just expose me to diverse characters; it challenged me to listen, learn and question my assumptions. Episodes like "Far Beyond the Stars," in which Sisko becomes Benny Russell, a Black writer struggling against racism in the 1950s,





forced me to confront uncomfortable truths about history and privilege. The show’s willingness to address injustice — sometimes directly, sometimes allegorically — helped me understand that allyship isn’t passive. It’s about actively supporting equity, amplifying marginalized voices, and working to build the future we claim to believe in.

**Celebrating Black History Month — and Beyond**

For me, Black History Month is an opportunity to celebrate achievements, confront ongoing inequities, and commit to being a better ally. *Star Trek’s* vision of Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations reminds me that honoring Black stories and contributions isn’t just for one month; it’s a year-round imperative.

As a Trekkie, I’m grateful

that *Star Trek* made diversity a core value. It taught me that inclusion enriches us all, and that everyone — regardless of race, background or identity — deserves to see themselves as part of the future. It also taught me that my role is to listen, uplift and advocate, both in fandom spaces and the wider world.

**The Voyage Forward**

*Star Trek’s* hopeful vision has always been about more than phasers and warp drives. It’s about imagining — and working toward — a universe where everyone belongs. This Black History Month, I celebrate the trailblazers, storytellers and fans who have made *Star Trek’s* future possible for all of us. And I pledge to keep learning, supporting and honoring the infinite combinations that make our world, and

our stories, richer.

In the words of *Star Trek’s* own Vulcan philosophy: Infinite diversity in infinite combinations. That’s the future worth striving for.



**MARK SICKLE:** Mark Sickle is an Egyptologist (archaeologist) by day, diehard Trekkie all the time. Founder of the Star Trek Family. Lives in West Virginia with his beautiful wife Lisa, puppies Odo, Kira, Wesley and Jadzia; and kitties Nala, Cymba, Cena, Elleadora and Aeolia.



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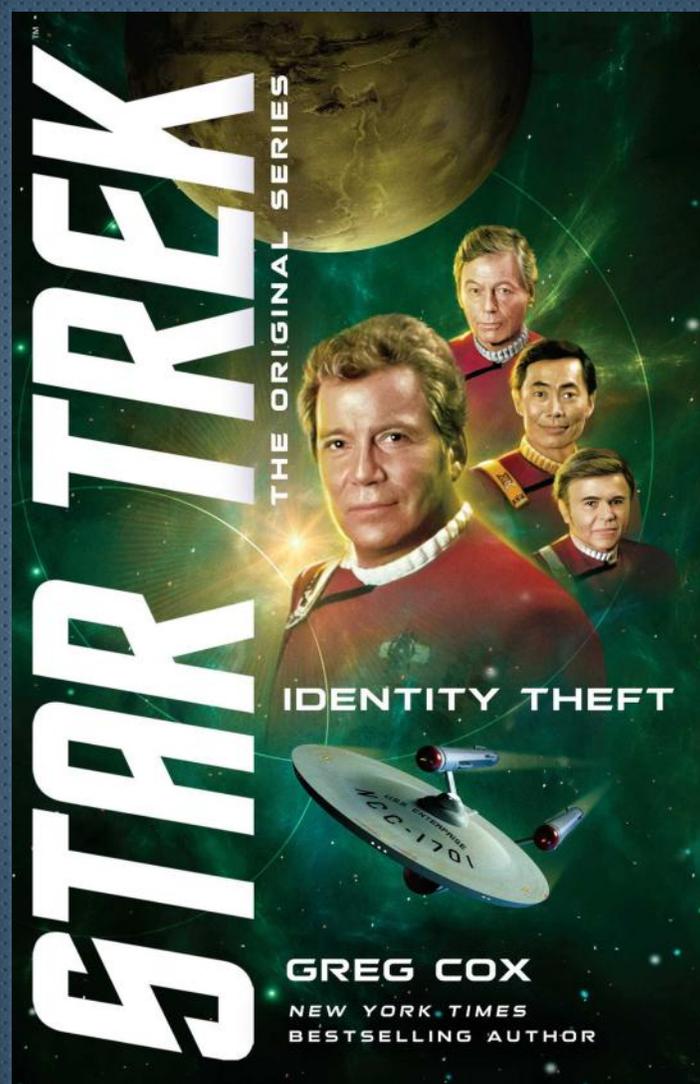


**NEW** MONTHLY BOOK COLUMN



# SUBSPACE READINGS

BOOK REVIEWS FROM THE FINAL FRONTIER



## "IDENTIFY THEFT" BY GREG COX

**ADAM SELVIDGE**

This all-new *Star Trek* novel celebrates the 60th anniversary of *Star Trek: The Original Series* — continuing the legacy of Captain James T. Kirk and the crew of the USS Enterprise.

2269: The prospect of peace had seemed unattainable until the assistance of the Federation. Finally, countless ancient enemies have stopped their conflicts simply by listening to one another. On the planet Voyzr, Captain James T. Kirk and his crew aided the planet to realize peace.

2289: Invited to celebrate 20 years of peace, the crew of the USS Enterprise-A is returning to Voyzr as honored guests. Security Chief Pavel Chekov remembers his visit to the planet as a green Ensign. He has always believed the negotiations were too easy, and he wondered if there are people on the planet who still long for war — and have been waiting for just the right moment to upend the peace. Unfortunately, Chekov discovers he is right when he finds himself in the middle of a dangerous ploy.

Released Dec. 2, 2025, and written by Greg Cox, this 352-page story is a classic tale of identity theft done in a classic *Star Trek* manner, with ancient technology, quantum entanglement, leaping off of tall buildings, and over a dozen species. Therbians, Yarfites, Mazarites, Catullans, Ardanans, Edosians, Nemarians, Ori-



ons, Boliens, Troyians, Efrosians and Voyzrians all interact in an exciting race against time. Voyzrians are a new species for this book, a species of six-fingered bipedal deer-like sentients who have antlers, which leads to some fun word play with ruttin' good phrasing during character frustrations. There's even a series of antler shaped drones that Chekov battles with in a thrilling space battle!

Greg Cox expertly juggles *Trek's* habit of only telling stories about the main trio of Kirk, Spock and McCoy with the need to tell stories about the supporting cast, some of whom haven't had their fair share of the spotlight. This is a difficult task for inexperienced authors, as there's a need to highlight their abilities without making them the hero of the week at the detriment of the normally heroic Captain and his First Officer. Cox was able to not only balance these demands, but also make every character involved hold true to how we would expect them to act. As with every other Greg Cox novel, if you have an encyclopedic knowledge of the characters involved you're going to recognize

many of the references in the story, but none of that is necessary to enjoy the main plot of the novel. It's a fun story that moves very quickly and blissfully stays in the same temporal period. It's in two different locations at the same time through some technology that's indistinguishable from magic.

Highly recommend!

**Rating:**  
5/5 Deltas



**ADAM SELVIDGE:** Adam has long loved *Star Trek* and grew up watching *The Next Generation* and set a personal mission to own every piece of printed *Star Trek* material. You can join him on his journey (and track your own collection)!



FAN ART



**BOBBY LINN**



THE  
WAY

TO THE

STARS

**BOBBY LINN**



# VASH

I've had many adventures, traveling with Q  
Seen wonderful planets with some great views  
Had fun, but he's obsessive  
He's much too possessive  
Seems moving on is the right thing to do



# THE ENEMY WITHIN

Captain needs his dual natures to be whole

One half is timid, the other is bold

By themselves they're chaotic

We'll need more than a tonic

Putting them back will help him keep control



# CULBER AND STAMETS

Who knew that life could be so sweet  
All we're doing is just brushing our teeth  
We may not always agree  
But both sides we try to see  
When we're together our hearts are complete



# WORD SEARCH

## DISCOVERY CHARACTERS

O K C U L B E R M O L L V P E  
 T V V L G K O V I C H R H J I  
 I G L K O R F B O O K E R B M  
 L E E O I R U G F G M N G N O  
 L O B L Q C C D R Q Y O R I L  
 Y R N U I E S A G A T A A L L  
 B G S H R I W N P E Y D Y S T  
 S I H A A N G X I O L I S S K  
 A O Y Z R N H O K W E R O O D  
 R U R R X U C A E O R A N N V  
 E S T A M E T S M S L H B R A  
 K G D E T M E R A E P K R H N  
 L E L A N D Y S A K K O Y Y C  
 C J R U M U D D X U R K C S E  
 V R A Y N E R L I N U S E K A

OWOSEKUN

GEORGIU

BURNHAM

PIKE

STAMETS

GRAYSON

NILSSON

KOL

BOOKER

GRUDGE

KOVICH

DETMER

CULBER

LELAND

TILLY

RAYNER

VANCE

LORCA

SPOCK

SARU

ADIRA

GRAY

MOLL

NHAN

TYLER

SAREK

BRYCE

LINUS

RHYS

RENO

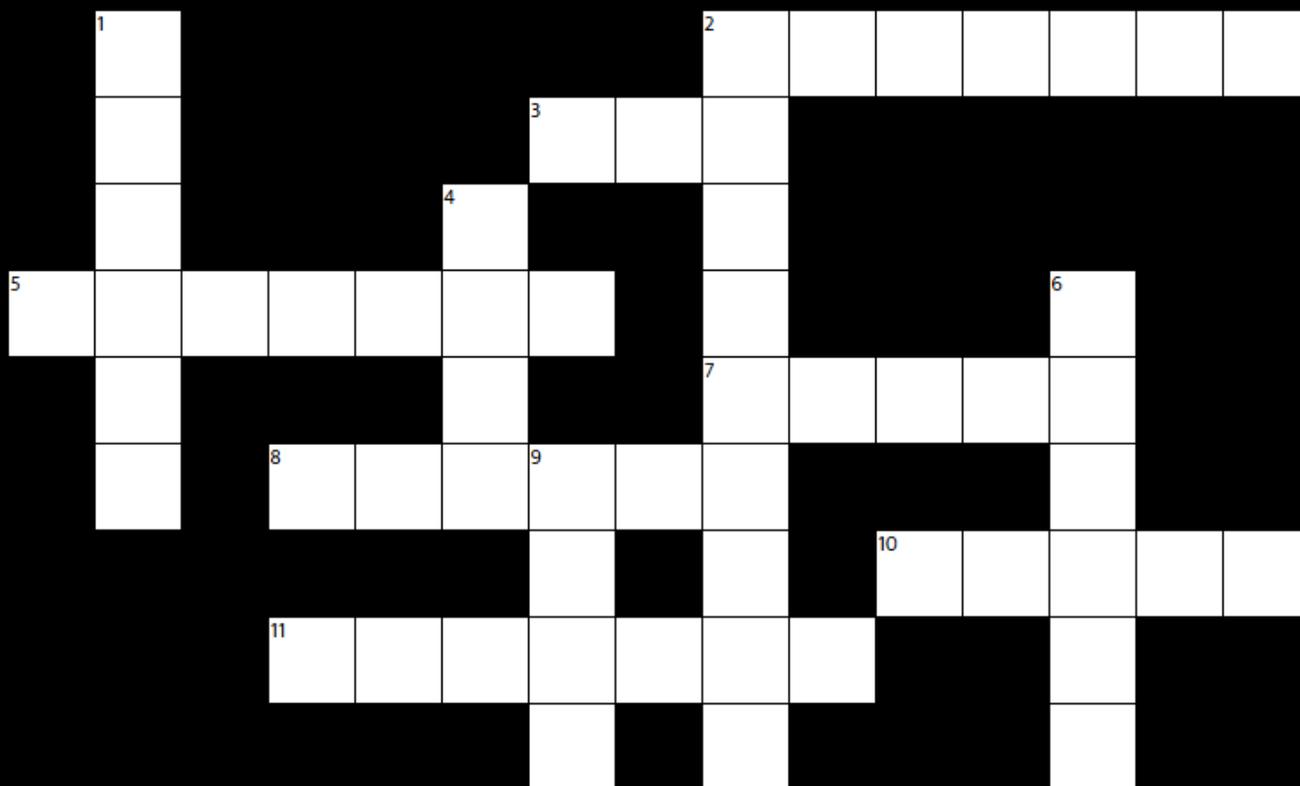
MUDD

MOLL



# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

## DISCOVERY



### ACROSS

- 2 STAMETS
- 3 MITCHELL
- 5 SARA
- 7 CLEVELAND
- 8 CULBER
- 10 ODED
- 11 ISAACS

### DOWN

- 1 DAVID
- 2 GRAY
- 4 HARLOW
- 6 CALLUM
- 9 JONES





# MARINA'S TREK CALENDAR

An updated list of events and conventions from all across the world. Marina is recognized in the *Star Trek* fandom as an expert on conventions, and a much beloved presence at Trek events!



**Marina Kravchuk**

Links are clickable

## MARCH

5-8: [Emerald City Comic Con](#) (in-person convention; William Shatner, Peter Weller attending)

7-8: [Dublin Comic Con - Spring Edition](#) (in-person convention; Kate Mulgrew, Denise Crosby)

13-15: [Fan Expo Cleveland](#) (in-person convention; Jonathan Frakes, Gates McFadden attending)

19-22: [Megacon Orlando](#) (in-person convention; Walter Koenig, Jonathan Frakes, Brent Spiner, Gates McFadden attending)

19-22: [GalaxyCon Richmond](#) (in-person convention; William Shatner, Nana Visitor, Terry Farrell, Armin Shimerman, Jess Bush attending)

27-29: [Planet Comicon](#) (in-person convention; William Shatner, Karl Urban attending)

## FEATURED EVENTS:

(Click the graphic for more info)

**March 13-15**



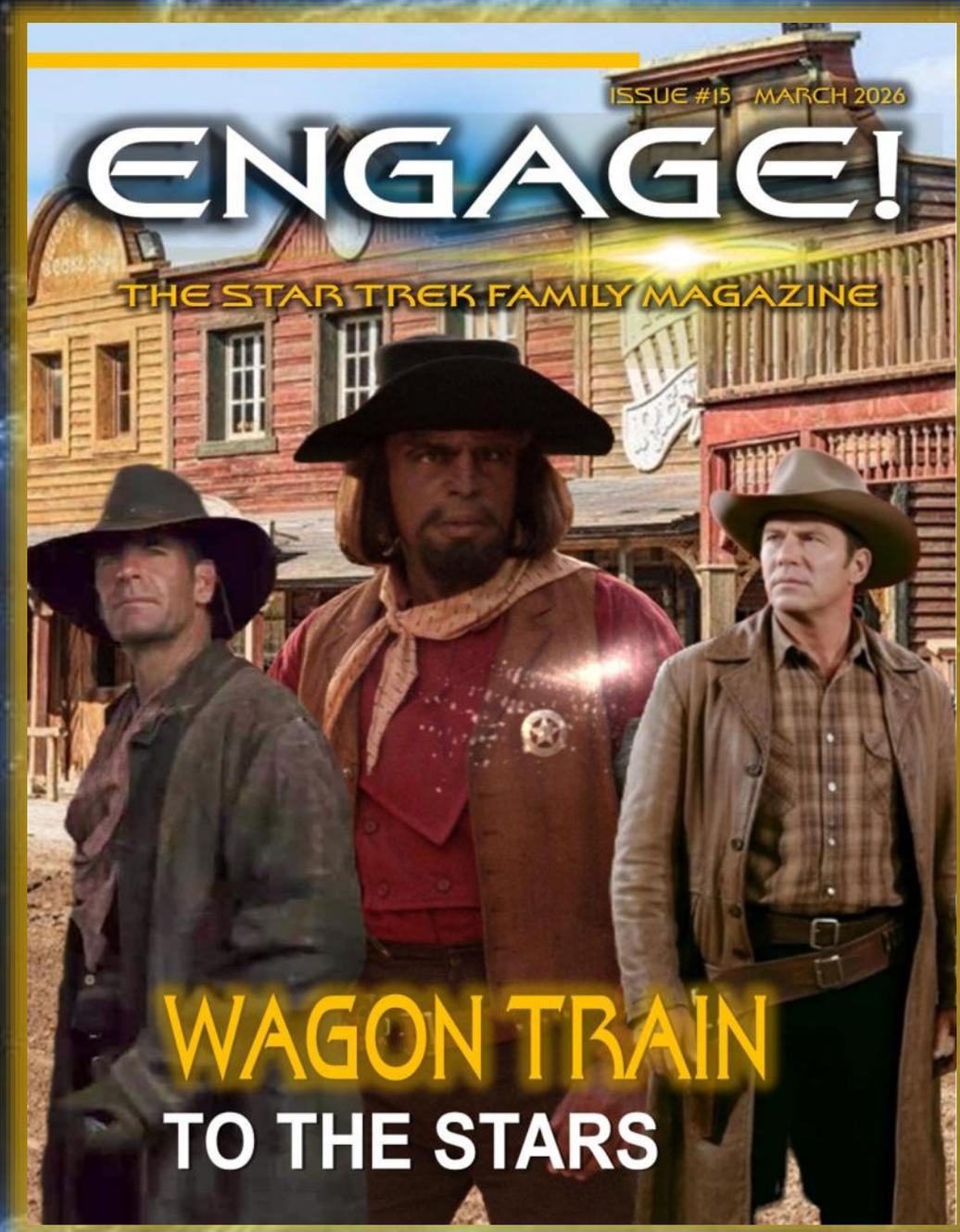
**March 28**



**FOR MORE EVENTS, PLEASE VISIT: [MARINA'S PAGE](#)**



# OUR NEXT ISSUE



**DUE OUT MARCH 31**

Send us feedback! [ENGAGESubmissions@yahoo.com](mailto:ENGAGESubmissions@yahoo.com)

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