

Bill Rea ? Am I still a Trekker?

I admit I used to be a Trekker, but I have lapsed over the years.

The original Star Trek series was on the air in the mid-60s, and I would watch it whenever my parents weren't around to object. Alas, the show only lasted three seasons, and during the third year, it came on at 10 Friday nights. Staying up that late, even on a Friday night, was something my folks tended to raise a fuss about.

But not to worry. Right after it went out of production, Star Trek went into syndication, meaning it would be on every afternoon, just about the time I got home from school. I remember reading in TV Guide one weekend that it was on the tube after school, so I rushed home that Monday, determined not to miss it. And they were showing episodes from the first season, and the offering that particular Monday was one of my favourites from the whole series; The Squire of Gothos (you Trekkers out there will know what I'm referring to). I was a very happy little kid that day.

Needless to say, I watched it everyday, so it wasn't too long before I could say I had seen all 78 episodes, and not too long after that, I was able to say I had seen them all multiple times.

I kept watching them all through high school, and even when I lived in residence while in university. There would be bunch of us who would gather when it was on; usually late at night, by this point.

In time, the motion pictures started coming out, although I will admit my interest was starting to decrease a bit. When I was away at school, money was a little on the tight side for me, and I didn't have a car. Going to the movies usually meant a two-mile walk, so my exposure to the cinema in those days consisted of attending campus showings of old movies. Not that I'm complaining. The guy who ran the campus theatre (his name was Jack) was very good at getting an eclectic mix of classics and trash. I saw Doctor Zhivago for the first of many times on campus, and Deep Throat for the first and last time. What a piece of garbage that was!

The point is between trying to make ends meet during my first experience living on my own and working during the summers when I was home, I didn't see the first Star Trek movie in the theatre. I had to wait several years until it came on TV .

By this point, a couple of the sequels had already gone through the theatres. They were okay, but nothing really that great, and certainly not living up to the hype that had accompanied them. And when I finally saw the first one, I thought it was the weakest of the bunch.

But then they started coming out with new versions of the Star Trek saga on TV.

I watched the first couple of episodes of the Next Generation with more curiosity than enthusiasm, then sort of abandoned the whole thing for most of the first season.

But come the second season, I started watching it again, and was enjoying what I was seeing. I guess maybe it took about a year to get the bugs out of the stories, and correct some of the mistakes they made in the original series.

The special effects were better, in keeping with the fact that things had had 20 years to progress during their development. But they complimented the story being told, rather than overpower it.

Moreover, the original series, particularly late in the run, had hardened into a format where the ship had Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock, with Dr. McCoy around to deliver the odd smart remark. Most of the rest of the ship's company were made up of a bunch of one-line wonders.

The Next Generation had a large cast, and they made use of it. As well, Captain Picard used his common sense the way Captain Kirk used his libido. True, wondering if he's going to get the girl can be a way to tell a story, but not if you want multi-dimensional offerings week after week.

I was editing newspapers by this point, but the Next Generation was on late Saturday afternoons, so I tried to make sure I was home to watch it. In time, I got a VCR, so it didn't matter whether I was home or not.

Then they brought in Deep Space Nine, starting while the Next Generation was still in production.

I fear that killed the proverbial Golden Goose, as I realized I was being forced to OD on Star Trek. My interest fell off, and it never really came back.

In time, I married, and my wife used to watch Voyager, and later Enterprise. I watched a couple of episodes of both with her, and tried to get interested, but I just couldn't.

I think the notion of Star Trek had slipped away from me.

Now we come to Discovery, which just started in the last couple of weeks. I have seen the first couple of episodes, and I have to tell you I am not too impressed. My main problem is the issue I alluded to a bit a couple of paragraphs ago. The show has some pretty impressive special effects, and the producers are letting them, at least in the early going, get in the way of telling good stories.

There were some decent special effects on the original series, with people dematerializing and materializing on the transporter, or

getting zapped with a phaser. But they didn't get in the way, so each episode was allowed to stand, more or less, on the story being told, and how well it was told.

I realize it is still early days for the new series, so I should be willing to see what develops a little down the road. I'll watch more of it if I have time. Right now, about the only series I make time for is Designated Survivor, and I'm only able to make time for that because Beth PVR's it for me.

But I'll try.

