

THE MAKING OF *STAR TREK*

SEASON ONE



JIM PAYNE

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By Jim Payne

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Introduction

It was a normal Spring day in March of 1972 when my Mother and I were living at a friend's house in New Jersey.

Dinner had just been finished, and we sat down to watch TV in the living room at 6:30PM on channel 48.

Being 8 years old at the time, my normal TV diet consisted of things like Gilligan's Island, The Brady Bunch, Gomer Pyle, etc. I had never shown any interest whatsoever in science fiction or suspense.

So imagine my surprise when I saw The Devil in the Dark for the very first time on TV that night.

A monster that wasn't really a monster. An alien who seemed to have no feelings but could "feel" what others felt. And a Captain who seemed to be representative of the very best of us.

Even an 8-year-old can see an ideal role model when he watched Captain Kirk.

Star Trek changed my life in that very moment. Every decision, every friend, every job, every hobby, every waking moment.

Star Trek had shaped them all.

I grabbed every book I could get my hands on. I watched the cartoons, I watched the daily reruns to the point that I could identify every episode by watching only the first few seconds of each teaser.

As I got older in school, my friends and I talked about Star Trek all the time. And on the other side of that, I found myself going to the very earliest of my convention experiences in the

1980s.

I cried tears of joy when the Enterprise graced the screen in Star Trek: The Motion Picture.

I truly wanted to believe that Star Trek The Next Generation would be great; and indeed, it did become so.

In the 1990's, my real life evolved, and as a Father and a Husband, my time for Star Trek became less and less. So much so, that it really amounted to watching whatever happened to be on TV when I had time.

Life had carried me away from Star Trek and my childhood passions. But I wasn't sad, as this is what I had wanted life to be.

Flash forward 40 years. COVID struck, and changed the world as we know it.

I was one of the lucky ones. An office job that could easily switch to work at home during the pandemic.

And I found myself with something I hadn't had in years: time.

And I missed the interoffice camaraderie from the pre-COVID days. I wanted to meet people and wondered who was "out there."

So I created a YouTube channel by the name of Weird Nashville. And I started making videos about random subjects that interested me.

About a year or so after I started; I wrote one day about this little-known cartoon that I loved in my childhood. You may have heard of it; Star Trek The Animated Series.

Apparently, I struck a nerve! Within 30 days, I had over 1500 new subscribers and the very beginning of a circle of online friends who would go on to be the same kind of close friends I

had in school in the old Star Trek days.

The people kept showing up; and about 3 months later I renamed the channel Trek World and have never looked back.

I've been so blessed as a result. I've met the people who have actually MADE Star Trek. And I mean, "really met", personal conversations and emails and messages that I had no right to ever believe I would be able to have.

Denise Okuda once told me on a conference call that we are all just friends that we haven't met yet.

That's what Star Trek means to me.

So now, I want to share some of my love for the series with you.

I have no illusions that this book is filled with fascinating material you've never seen or heard of before. I'm confident there is quite a bit of that in here; but the point of this book is to welcome you to my Star Trek fascination and step you episode by episode through this wonderful journey that we've been given.

I hope the things that you read here make you smile. Maybe even laugh. And yes, possibly teach.

But above all, I hope that they help you remember.

Because, you see, there's a little bit of Peter Pan in each and every one of us. And Star Trek is our own personal Neverland.

Jim Payne
Nashville, TN
October 2026

The Cage



The first time Star Trek boldly went anywhere, Captain Kirk wasn't aboard. The captain who was aboard was considering quitting, Mister Spock was smiling, and the most logical officer on the bridge was somebody else entirely. NBC looked at this spectacularly expensive trip into the future and asked for another one. Most rejected pilots disappear into a warehouse. This one became a second pilot, a two-part television episode, a home-video release, and eventually a piece of television history. For something called *The Cage*, it was remarkably difficult to keep the blasted thing locked up.

For many of us, the first sight of that strange earlier Enterprise came in *The Menagerie*. Jeffrey Hunter was in command, the uniforms looked almost right, and Spock appeared to have forgotten several years of Vulcan emotional discipline. It was like finding an old family photograph and discovering that Dad had once been played by a different actor. But this wasn't a flashback invented for the series. It was the first serious attempt to make Star Trek

work, back when nobody knew there would be a franchise, conventions, or fifty years of arguments about the placement of starship windows.

Gene Roddenberry's original pitch was a rather clever television machine. A spaceship, a continuing crew, and a new adventure every week. He called it Wagon Train to the stars, which made perfect sense to executives accustomed to westerns. Keep the wandering characters, lose the horses, and replace the frontier town with a planet nobody has ever seen. Suddenly you can tell stories a cowboy drama couldn't touch. Of course, first you have to persuade someone to pay for the spaceship.

That someone was Desilu, the studio associated with Lucille Ball. Now, the story isn't that Lucy personally pulled a starship out of her handbag. Her company needed programs, and executives including Oscar Katz and Herb Solow helped move Roddenberry's proposal toward production. NBC was interested, too. Katz later recalled that the network wanted to see the difficult alien-planet story first, as proof that Desilu could deliver it. Imagine being told to demonstrate that you can produce a science-fiction series by starting with the most difficult possible example. No pressure. Just invent the future, populate it with telepathic aliens, and try not to bankrupt the studio.

Even the captain's name was changing. A surviving script notice dated November twenty-fifth, nineteen sixty-four, changed Captain James Winter to Christopher Pike. Filming began two days later. The script itself had also been called *The Menagerie*. So if the names of the pilot and the later two-part episode have ever confused you, don't worry. The paperwork was already preparing that particular headache.

Jeffrey Hunter gave Pike an unusual quality for a

television space hero: exhaustion. His captain had lost people and was questioning whether he could continue commanding the ship. John Hoyt's Doctor Boyce arrived with a drink and an uncomfortable question. Director Robert Butler later praised their quiet conversation. Remove the starship and the uniforms, and the scene still works. One man is worn down by responsibility. Another knows exactly what he's avoiding. Space travel at the end of a very long working week.

Leonard Nimoy, meanwhile, was still discovering Spock. This version could show excitement, curiosity, and even a smile at the strange plants on Talos Four. The cooler, more controlled presence belonged to Majel Barrett's Number One. Watch the pilot without mentally correcting these people into their later versions. They weren't breaking the rules of Star Trek. They were inventing them. The handbook hadn't been written, and neither had the furious letters from fans explaining what everyone had got wrong.

Pike's weariness also tells us something about the series that might have emerged. This isn't yet the familiar weekly ritual in which Kirk confidently sizes up a problem and proceeds to outwit it, occasionally with the assistance of a ripped shirt. The Cage starts with a captain who is not entirely sure he wants the job. His fatigue gives the Talosians something to exploit: the promise of another life, free from command and its consequences. The fantasy works as a temptation because Pike already feels trapped by the responsibilities he has chosen. That's more psychologically pointed than a simple monster-of-the-week story. It also helps explain why the finished pilot could seem like an unusual advertisement for an adventure series. The hero is introduced by asking whether he might prefer to stop adventuring.