

Leonard Nimoy is back in Star Trek V

STAR SPEAK



FRANK SANELLO

Leonard Nimoy returns as the stoical Mr. Spock in "Star Trek V: The Final Frontier."

After directing and starring in the two previous "Star Trek" films, Nimoy has relinquished part of the workload. His friend and co-star, William Shatner, directed the fifth big-screen adventure of the Starship Enterprise.

Although Nimoy is best known on-screen as Mr. Spock, the Boston-born actor has found steady work behind the camera as well. In addition to two "Star Trek" films, Nimoy also directed "Three Men and a Baby," the 1987 box-office hit; and "The Good Mother," which starred Diane Keaton in a drama about alleged child molestation.

Unlike some members of the "Star Trek" cast, Nimoy has enjoyed a successful career apart from the voyages of the Starship Enterprise.

After the original TV series finished production in 1969, Nimoy spent two years playing a crime-fighting genius on "Mission: Impossible." He toured in a one-man show about the life of Vincent Van Gogh, which was later televised. And he has appeared in the TV miniseries "Marco Polo"; and "A Woman Called Golda," as Golda Meir's husband.

Q. Since you directed the previous "Star Trek" and Shatner directed this one, was there any rivalry on the set between the two of you?

A. None at all. We've been great friends since the TV series. Directing is such a technical exercise, there's no time for rivalry. You're so worried about setting up the next shot or getting the take before you lose the light, egos just don't have a chance to come into play.

Q. How would you compare your directing style to Shatner's?

A. I think Bill said it best: "The difference between a Nimoy film and a Shatner film is that Shatner's have a lot more running and jumping." He's much more physical. I'm much more cerebral. I'll duck a fight scene any way I can. During the TV series, whenever there was a way to let him do a fight scene, instead of me, I'd let him.



Leonard Nimoy

Q. I read that your reluctance to "get physical" led to the famous Vulcan nerve pinch.

A. Right. The script said I was supposed to hit the villain with the butt of a gun. I said, "Why don't I just pinch his neck instead?" From then on, whenever I had to incapacitate somebody, instead of getting all sweaty and bruised, all I did was apply a little pressure to the back of his neck. I think we could end world violence with the Vulcan nerve pinch (laughs).

Q. What's your next project?

A. I'm directing footage for a ride at the new MGM/Disney amusement park in Orlando, Fla. It's called "Body Wars." We tell the audience they've been miniaturized and take them through a tour of the human body. It's

sort of like "Fantastic Voyage."

Q. The two "Star Trek" films you directed were huge box-office hits. How did they ever let you direct a completely different kind of movie like "Three Men and a Baby"?

A. One of the reasons my "Star Trek" movies made so much money was that they had a lot of humor. And, obviously, "Three Men and a Baby" was also a comedy. After "Star Trek IV," I was offered a lot of comedies. Plus, I had worked with the same studio executives on all three films. They knew my work, and we had a good relationship.

Q. Why do you think "The Good Mother" failed with the critics and the movie-going public?

A. The script was sensitive and tasteful on a controversial subject. I thought it would attract good actors. I think (the star) Diane Keaton would have been a serious contender for awards if her character had ended up more heroic. Anyway, the film did well in video because, I believe, the audience feels more comfortable watching the subject matter in the privacy of their homes.

Q. Will you direct a sequel to "Three Men and a Baby"?

A. I'd like to. I don't know if we can clear the schedules of the three stars, so they can get back together. We're thinking of using the same twins, who were in the first film, because it

'I'll keep making "Star Trek" movies as long as they want me.'

— Leonard Nimoy

would be interesting for the audience to see them grow.

Q. Any chance you will direct "Star Trek VI"?

A. I love directing. I love acting. But I don't want to have to do both again at the same time. It's exhausting. I'll keep making "Star Trek" movies as long as they want me, but I won't act and direct them at the same time.

Q. Has Mr. Spock typecast you as an actor?

A. Well, most of the work I get offered is as a director. The acting jobs I'm offered I really don't want. I got an offer to play a French Foreign Legionnaire and a movie based on "The Pit and the Pendulum." I said "no, thank you" to both.

Q. What's your favorite episode of the old "Star Trek" TV series?

A. I liked "Amok Time." "The Trouble With Tribbles" was a lot of fun. "This Side of Paradise" — Spock fell in love. "City on the Edge of Forever" with Joan Collins. And the pilot, "The Menagerie," was really good TV science fiction.

Q. Did you ever think there would be five "Star Trek" movies?

A. I thought each film was the last. After the first one, I was sure there wouldn't be any others because nobody liked it. I was also concerned that they'd make them cheaper and cheaper, and run it into the ground, like they did with "Planet of the Apes." Each one of those got tackier and tackier.

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