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Star Trek persists with 10th film

Movie review

Aaron Shakra
Pulse Reporter

"Star Trek: The Next Generation" has been a film series for as long as its 178-episode television run. The show, which ran from 1987 to 1994 on syndicated television, starred Patrick Stewart as Captain Jean-Luc Picard and solidified "Star Trek" popularity.

"Star Trek: Nemesis," the fourth film in the series — and the 10th "Star Trek" film overall — will arrive in theaters Dec. 13.

The television series, which was the last "Star Trek" production that creator Gene Roddenberry was intimately involved with, was not an immediate success. Many fans, critics, and producers had their doubts about its viability. However, as the series continued,



Courtesy photo

"The Next Generation" began setting, then breaking, the standards of science fiction television.

So how have Picard, Riker, Data, Worf, Geordi, Troi and Dr. Crusher fared on the big screen? The first film for the crew was "Star Trek: Generations," released in November 1994. This was possibly the pinnacle of "Star Trek" popularity. "The Next Generation" had ended its television run, and the series had not yet been (but was on the verge of being) diluted by the plague of media, pop culture overexposure and too many spin-offs.

In some ways, "Generations" suffered because it was a setup, designed to transition the movie series away from the original "Star Trek" crew, whose motion picture run ended in 1991 with "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country." The result was a film featuring the unsatisfactory destruction of the Enterprise-D and an inorganic blending of Captains Picard and Kirk, the latter whose empty death scene drew ire from fans.

"Star Trek: First Contact," came along in 1996, and finally established "P-Stew" and company as a force of their own. Jonathan Frakes, who plays Commander Riker, directed the film and was able to work unfettered by the constraints and aesthetic of the television series.

The crew had a brand new ship, the Enterprise-E, and the story centered around the Borg, the creepiest, most effective enemies to come from "Star Trek" yet.

"First Contact" was generally the most successful "Star Trek" film ever. This ensured another sequel, and the result was "Star Trek: Insurrection," a trite jaunt in saccharine sensibility, released in 1998. "Insurrection" — again directed by Frakes — wasn't entirely bad, but the scale of its story was unfit for the big screen. On the

whole, it plays like an extended episode with big-budget production values (including Patrick Stewart's \$9 million-plus paycheck).

Because "Star Trek" films are costly endeavors driven by box office revenues, their creation is dependent on success. And the lackluster performance of "Insurrection" created a question of how financially viable "The Next Generation" was. Speculation in regard to the content of the next film ran rampant — ideas ranged from replacing the crew to mixing the cast from other series for an "all star" Trek film — until last year, when plans for "Nemesis" solidified.

The new film is written by "Gladiator" screenwriter John Logan, a self-proclaimed fan, and directed by Stuart Baird. Both are newcomers to the series, but rumor has it they've created an epic character-driven film focused around the Romulans.

The first cut of "Star Trek: Nemesis" was roughly 170 minutes long. About 40 minutes of this was lost in editing, including a scene with former series regular Wesley Crusher. This is unfortunate, because on the sheer basis of screen time alone, the characters from "The Next Generation" are more developed than in any other Trek series.

The four-year window since the release of "Insurrection" makes it the longest lapse of time between Trek films since they began in 1979 with "The Motion Picture." Therefore, marketing for "Nemesis" has a built-in fail-safe — the ambiguous tagline "A Generation's Final Journey Begins." From this, one can conclude that the journey will indeed, begin and end with "Nemesis" — unless it can make bank.

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