

Strong ensembles,  
good-humored  
approach  
strengthen two  
current films

**STAR TREK IV, The Voyage Home**

Starring: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy and Company, Catherine Hicks  
Directed by: Leonard Nimoy  
Now playing at: KOIN Center Cinema, Theaters 3 and 4

Traveling back in time via a dangerous slingshot flight around the sun, *Star Trek IV* truly is a trip home and a sentimental journey

**Cinema**

back in time.

In the '60s, hippies everywhere congregated to watch *Star Trek*. It was a good series to get ripped to, and created multitudes of fans for this quality (and contemporary) sci-fi series. Our collective memory bank bulges with stories that were thinly-disguised

allegories in favor of the liberal causes of the day — many, and popular. Moreover, the show has always offered something for everyone; many payoffs, every show. Not just a good story with good performances, but the featuring of humanitarian points of view, with a clearly "correct" side you could easily embrace. Add to that clever double entendres and sly references that give the ones who "get" them a feeling of accomplishment. Not only that, but the kind of humor that requires extra knowledge and gives added dimension to the story, is incredibly fun to share with others.

*Star Trek IV* is a thoroughly successful sendup of the whole *Star Trek* anthology. Bones has never been crabbier. Chekov has never been more Russian than when he asks a policeman where he can find some "nuclear wessels." It's a political commentary — most of the people in the world can feel superior to the nasty whale hunters. You can really feel good about liking this movie. What we have here is an ensemble of good actors who have been working together, literally for decades, to produce a quality product, and we have them doing everything they do best in the best way it can be done. You just can't do it any better than this.

Sly humor, much of it directed at the very hippies who enjoyed the original and subsequent runs of *Star Trek* and the time in which they first enjoyed it. Good special effects.

Heroic heroes, saving Earth; Captain Kirk personally saving the whales who are the only ones who can save Earth.

We watch this film and are entertained, humbled, warmed, humanized, and most of all, socialized. We went opening night. The joint was jumpin' — a very long line and both theaters full. People laughed and looked around to see who else "got" some of the subtler jokes; exclaimed "Oh, yeah!" When it was over, applause. Watching this film is a pleasant and rewarding group event. Kirk, Spock, *et al* have been around long enough to have a strong sense of their place in history, and have used that knowledge to carve out yet more hand- and footholds into our hearts and memories.

**DOWN BY LAW**

Starring: Tom Waits, John Lurie, Roberto Benigni

Directed by: Jim Jarmusch

Music by: John Lurie

Songs by: Tom Waits

Now playing at: KOIN Center

*Down By Law* is playing with another movie, 7-minutes long, called *Precious Images*, which is a film composed of very short, very famous film scenes from most of the most famous films to date. Invigorating, challenging, the thing that most impressed me was how much better black and white films work.

They're just more exciting and infinitely more romantic, and I was remembering how the most evocative scenes in *Kiss of the Spider Woman* were the black and white ones. Thus it was a pleasant perception to see *Down By Law* so nicely done in black and white. As Tom Waits is rasping out something about "sixteen men on a dead man's

chest," the credits unfold over the camera's eye panning a low-downscale residential area in New Orleans. Moves to Zack having a fight done to him by his crabby girlfriend. She kicks him out. He's a good D.J. but just lost another job for not playing the game. He gets framed for a serious crime and gets remanded to a depressing New Orleans jail. John Lurie, as Jack, the pimp, is framed for another serious crime. After a time in jail together, Roberto (Bob) joins them. Bob is Italian, can barely speak English. Much of the humor in this film involves double entendres, the language barrier, and Bob's ebullient spirit wrestling with his miniscule vocabulary. "His lips," turns out to mean, "He sleeps." It's fragile humor, but the more effective for the type of risks it takes. And it works because of the strong ensemble. The three actors are ensemble perfection. I had no idea Tom Waits could act so competently. He is very, very good; so is Lurie, so is Benigni.

Bob actually has, if not committed a crime, at least done something. He has, by far, the most personality, the most energy, and is the most likeable. The three men form a closer bond because of Bob, and he gets them out of prison. Though they are in a swamp and Bob can't swim, he manages to get them out of a couple of scrapes, and eventually gets the three of them another chance at life on the outside.

You don't have an easy time figuring out what the point is here. A couple of losers transformed, grudgingly, for a short time, into something else by a guy with schmalz. *Joi de vivre* from Bob, who has read Valt Veetman and Bob a-Frost, but only in Italian. At the movie's end, Zack and Jack are heading off in directions they can only identify as "left" or "right," and Bob has effervesced himself into the heart and home of a lonely Italian bombshell. You figure it out.

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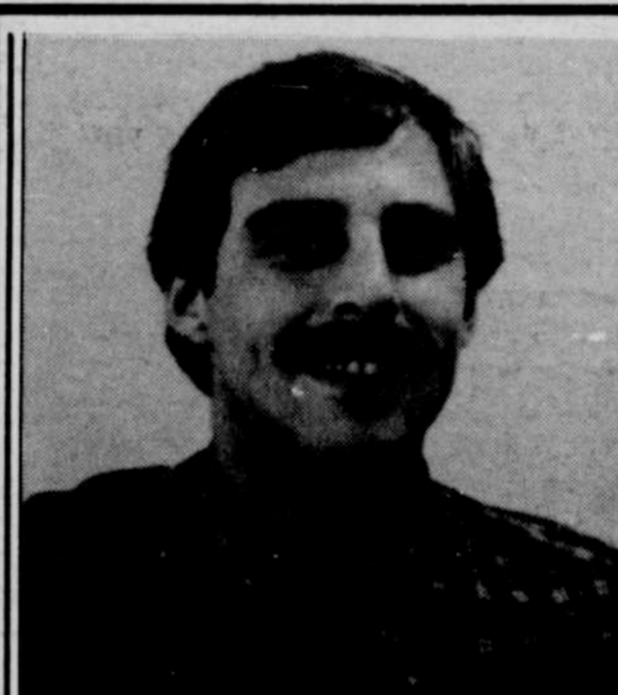
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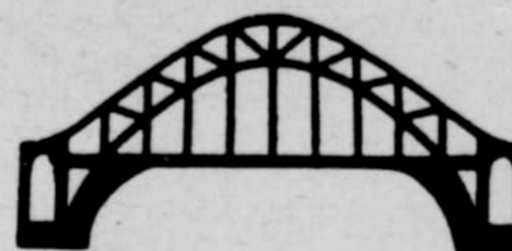


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