

Trekking after Trekkies

Mostly, "normal" people visit Star Trek convention

Mention the words "Star Trek convention" and a preconceived picture pops into mind.

It's a vision of hordes of Trekkies dressed in Starfleet uniforms and paste-on Spock ears. They pepper each other with endless trivia questions (What deck is Riker's quarters on?) and vie for copies of pastcon programs autographed by the likes of Jimmy Doohan and Majel Barrett.

In short, any Star Trek convention crowd is bound to look like a casting call for "Revenge of the Nerds."

One recalls the "Saturday Night Live" skit where William Shatner told a crowd of shamefaced Trekkies, "Get a life. It's just a TV show."

Star Trek shrine in the corner of your room? If you can't find it here, you can't find it anywhere.

Anything you can think of, plus a few things you wouldn't think of, were for sale — cloth patches, pins, key chains, action figures and photographs (autographed and not).

Booths hawked copies of every "Star Trek" episode ever made, plus a special "blooper" tape for \$19.95. For the more adventurous, one retailer offered a special R-rated Star Trek featuring Marina Sirtis (Counselor Troi) in the nude, baring all in a topless whipping scene with Faye Dunaway, which also sold for a paltry \$19.95.

One recalls the "Saturday Night Live" skit where William Shatner told a crowd of shamefaced Trekkies, "Get a life. It's just a TV show."

Like most other stereotypes, that of Trekkies is a bit exaggerated. Not all of us are social outcasts living in our parents' basements.

Trekcon, held at the Omaha Marriott on April 4, was a readily available way to test the stereotypes and gain insight into TV's most enduring show.

There were no Spock ears in sight, but a few homemade uniforms, both Starfleet and Klingon, were seen.

Small, gold communicator badges sprouted on jackets, along with uniform insignias. And there were a few people who might be living with their parents 20 years hence. But for the most part, it was a normal crowd — average people with lots of children and a scattering of older folks.

Inside, after laying down \$15, one could find a smorgasbord of merchandise. Missing a copy of the Star Trek novel "My Enemy, My Ally?" No problem. Can't find that AMT model kit of the U.S.S. Enterprise bridge? Ditto. Looking for that special poster to hang over the

If the booths weren't enough, you could pay \$110 for a personally autographed picture of William Shatner. Leonard Nimoy's autographed pics were a steal at \$35.

The main event featured John DeLancie, known as "Q" from "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

How does it feel to play the most evil, maniacal, omnipotent being in the universe?

"It's not the way I interpret it," DeLancie admitted, "but I'm happy for you to."

DeLancie said he was happy to reprise his role once a season because it was one that people enjoy seeing and he enjoyed doing.

In addition to his work on "ST:TNG," DeLancie appeared in "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle." He also recently finished a run as Tanner in Michael Weller's stage production "Buying Time."

Apart from acting, DeLancie

See TREKON on 10



Therese Goodlett/DN

Kevin Neff, of Omaha, chooses some Star Trek pictures to take home from the Trek Convention Sunday at the Marriott in Omaha. Neff said that though this was his first convention, he has been a longtime fan.

Star Trek officer visits Omaha

By Matt Woody
Staff Reporter

I wanted to pinch myself to see if I was dreaming.

Not only was I sitting in the same room with a Starfleet officer, I was having a conversation with him.

OK, it was an interview, but still any devout Trekker's dream come true: I was face to face with Siddig El Fadil, the actor who plays Dr. Julian Bashir on "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine."

We talked for about 15 minutes Saturday after his appearance at the World of Wheels auto show in Omaha. It was an odd place, I thought, to meet a man who works on a space station in the outer reaches of the galaxy.

Every bit as charming as the dashing, young Bashir, the 27-year-old El Fadil, who is single, told me how he first got involved with acting. He said his mother had worked in the theater, so acting seemed like "a normal course to follow."

El Fadil was friendly and personable during the interview and appeared laid-back and comfortable, wearing dark pants, a white shirt and a maroon cardigan, and puffing on a cigarette.

The most noticeable feature about the actor, or his alter-ego Bashir, is his accent. I guessed it was British.

"I was born in the Sudan and I moved to England when I was 3," he said, "so I suppose I'm sort of pseudo-English."

El Fadil has lived in England ever since and received his formal training from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA).

After he completed the academy's three-year program, El Fadil worked at a couple of London theaters, both acting and directing.

Only within the last two or three years did he begin television work. However, fans wanting to see more of El Fadil's work may have difficulty finding it.



Courtesy of Paramount Pictures

Siddig El Fadil plays Dr. Bashir on the popular show "Deep Space Nine."

Other than "Deep Space," he hasn't done any shows in the United States, although he said some have aired here "on PBS, so no one ever saw them."

One of these shows was "A Dangerous Man, Lawrence After Arabia," made by David Putnam, which El Fadil said was a sequel to "Lawrence of Arabia."

He also worked on "The Big Battalions," a three-part drama, which he said probably would be shown on PBS as well.

In fact, it was his work on "Lawrence" that

got El Fadil his job at the edge of Federation space. He said that Rick Berman, one of the executive producers of "Deep Space," saw it and asked El Fadil to be on the show.

But nothing in England prepared El Fadil for life in Los Angeles.

"It's, like, a bizarre place. It's not home to anybody, I don't think," he told me. "But I'm getting used to it now; I'm leaving."

El Fadil said he worked about four 12-hour days each week. However, one week was particularly busy, when, in addition to being possessed by a maniacal criminal on "Deep Space," he moonlighted on "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

It was a good time, he said. "Brent (Spiner, who plays the android Data) is a terrific kind of guy, so we had a good time together. And so is LeVar (Burton, Lt. Cmdr. Geordi La Forge); he's fun, too," El Fadil told me. "Everyone was very welcoming and very friendly."

"Deep Space" premiered in January, but El Fadil's star has risen quickly. He's taken it in stride, though.

"LA is very blasé about stars," he said, taking a drag off his cigarette. "It's only when you go out of LA that you kind of bump into people who come up and say, 'Hi, how are you?' But it's not too bad."

As a part of this fame, El Fadil often makes appearances in public, but rarely at car shows.

"This is unusual," he said. "I usually go to the Star Trek conventions, where a lot of Trekkers are — and they're terrific fans, because they're there to see you, and you're there to see them — and, you know, it has a nice family feeling about it."

Filming for "Deep Space" began in August 1992 and just recently ended for the season. Production will resume in July.

As for the future, El Fadil said he would return to his London flat to work in England over the break. After that he "will do Star Trek, and will probably end up directing something... and that's it for the moment."

Musician shares folk wisdom on reaction release



Robyn Hitchcock & The Egyptians
"Respect"
A&M Records

Robyn Hitchcock has said he conceived this album as an acoustic piece that would capture the flavor of on-the-road improvisational tin can and guitar sessions. The album was supposed to be a reaction against rock clichés in general, and the high-quality of his last release, "Perspex Island," in particular. But somewhere along the way that idea was partially lost with the overdubbing of horn and string arrangements.

The result is a more interesting collection of songs than otherwise might have been.

"The Yip Song," track one on "Respect," loudly announces the band's arrival: a blend of self-styled upbeat folk and subpunk. From then on, the music slides into a more mellow groove, with a series of drifting, more poignant melodies.

"When I Was Dead" takes elements of floating George Harrison-type psychedelia and underscores it with eastern-inspired backing harmonies.

Also notable is "Driving Aloud (Radio Storm)" because of the lyrics:

"Honey take it on me/Cause your lungs are in terrible shape and it's easy to see/I've been X-raying you since you walked into here/You've got nothing to hope/You've got nothing to fear/Heartburn and chemistry and lung disease/Make mincemeat of your passion on days like these..."

None of the other tracks match up to "The Yip Song" in terms of sheer power, but "Respect" imparts a great deal of the folk wisdom Hitchcock has learned during his long career of writing, recording and touring.

— Matthew Grant

Duran Duran's new disc reeks of poppy tunes

Duran Duran
"Duran Duran"
Capitol Records

If practice is supposed to make perfect, someone should tell Duran Duran.

After 15 years of writing and playing music together, Duran Duran should have gotten it right by now. Instead, the boys from England have gotten worse.

The band's latest release is neither as deficient as, say, the Arcadia fiasco, nor as good as anything they did in the early to mid-'80s.

Ever since Duran Duran lost Andy Taylor and Roger Taylor, nothing the group has done — including this 13-track, eponymic titled disc — has been worth the shrink wrap that covers the cases.

"Ordinary World," the first single, sets the tone for the rest of the album. It's got a catchy kind of tune that can get stuck in one's mind — like a record player that skips — but there's nothing truly exceptional about it.

The rest of the disc is filled either with cryptic ballads or with disjointed, hoppy-poppy songs.

The best of all these tunes is "Femme Fatale," written by legendary rocker/songwriter Lou Reed. This one's good, not only because it's got Reed's fingerprints all over it, but because Duran Duran actually is able to pull off the style.

Simon Le Bon, John Taylor, Nick Rhodes and Warren Cuccurullo wrote, at least in part, the remaining tracks and infused them with their pseudo-wisdom and false intellectualism.

— Shannon Uehling