

Wheaton moves on after his television trek

By Sean Mc Carthy
Staff Reporter

Actor Wil Wheaton describes himself as one of the biggest science-fiction geeks he knows. Best known to the public for his role as Wesley Crusher, the adolescent computer genius in "Star Trek: The Next Generation," Wheaton said last week he would like his acting career to boldly go beyond Star Trek.

Wheaton left the set of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" in late 1991 to pursue a movie career. Though he left the cast as a regular player, Wheaton stressed that he still wanted to appear frequently in the series. The show's producers were more anxious to send Wheaton off the set on a more permanent basis, he said.

"On my last day of shooting as a regular, my locker was cleaned out and my name was removed before I ever got off the set," Wheaton said.

Wheaton took a break from acting in 1993. During that time, he worked for a computer company in Topeka, Kansas. After that hiatus, Wheaton said he was eager to return to the stage.

"Whenever I'm on stage, I feel like I am at home," Wheaton said.

Aside from returning for his departure in "Star Trek: The Next Generation" early this year, Wheaton also is slated to appear as a villain in a new series for the Fox network. The series, titled "Sirens," is slated to appear in the fall. Wheaton is cast to play a serial killer in the show.

"It was a departure for me," said Wheaton. "It's sort of like playing the anti-Wesley Crusher."

Appearing at Star Trek conventions, as he did Sunday in Omaha, Wheaton said he encountered a variety of people. Some people can't separate Wil Wheaton from Wesley Crusher, he said.

Though he likes the interaction between fans, Wheaton said there were drawbacks to appearing on the road.

"The worst thing is to wake up in a bed in the middle of the night, thinking that I'm in my bed at home, but you're actually in a bed at the Marriott," he said.

Since "Star Trek: The Next Generation" ended its seven-year television journey through the stars, Wheaton said he has kept in contact with other actors from the show, particularly Brent Spiner, who played the android Data.

"I have nothing but the fullest respect for all of the actors," Wheaton said. "They're all like

family to me. Star Trek has always been my first love. If they ever wanted me back, I would go without question."

Wheaton had been the focus of media attention late last year due to the death of River Phoenix, one of his co-stars in "Stand by Me." The attention given to him was like the attention given to other topics in the media's eye, Wheaton said.

Wheaton complained that the media focused too much on a topic, such as drug addiction, for a short period of time and then ignored the topic a short time later.

"In our society, people who should have a voice don't," Wheaton said. "People, such as actors, who are in and out of rehab, are given tremendous voice. If I'm going to have this voice I would like to give a good message to it."

Other movies in which Wheaton has acted include the 1991 film "Toy Soldiers" and the 1992 film "December".

Wheaton said that each different acting medium held a different appeal to him. On television, a character has more time to develop, he said, but an actor is basically confined to his character. With movie roles, there are more chances to explore different characters, but those characters have a limit of two hours on screen, he said.

"I really love the theater, though," Wheaton said. "The acting goes directly to the audience. You're right there."

Wheaton doesn't consider himself the run-of-the-mill celebrity. He said he preferred playing hacky sack with friends instead of hanging out with other actors.

While he plans to continue auditioning for roles, Wheaton is slated to enroll at UCLA this fall. Like his most famous character, Wheaton said that he had an interest in science, and conversely, in eastern philosophy.

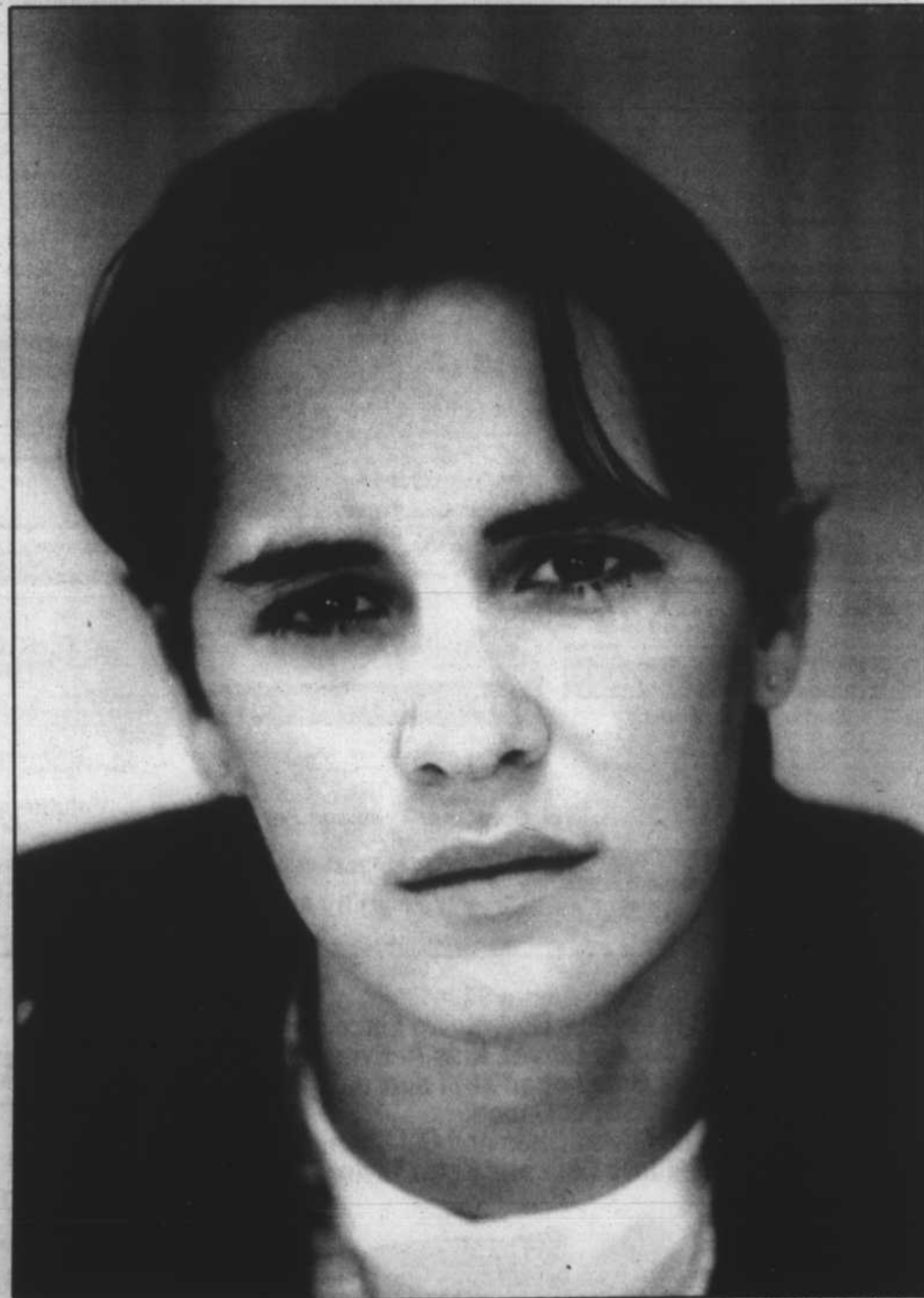
"I like to turn to scientific books to find out what is happening to our world in the future," Wheaton said. "And I also like reading philosophy to deal with the new technology in our world."

As for upcoming roles, Wheaton said that he would love to work with the "Star Trek: The Next Generation" cast again, or appear in the upcoming "Star Wars" trilogy.

"I will walk in the far background for a movie by (George) Lucas," he said. "I would pay for it."

Aside from science fiction, Wheaton said there was another Fox show on which he would like to appear.

"I would kill to have just one slot on 'Melrose Place,'" he said.



Courtesy of StarNet Productions

Wil Wheaton, known for his role as Wesley Crusher on "Star Trek: The Next Generation," appeared Sunday at a Star Trek convention in Omaha.

'Blue' presents lush images of modern love and death



"Blue" is a lush, modern vision of romance, love, sex and death.

It is the story of Julie, the widow of a famous composer who was working on a major concerto to be played simultaneously in twelve European cities.

It is also a movie about the effects of tragedy on the survivors.

One of the effects, curiously, is liberation. Directed by Krzysztof Kieslowski, "Blue" is the first part of a trilogy named for the colors of the French flag, and built around the framework of what those colors repre-

sent — Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

"We wanted to show what these well-known historical notions mean to us today, who already possess liberty, who are already equal, and for whom fraternity is a common ideal," Kieslowski said.

Julie is portrayed by Juliette Binoche, who also starred in "Damage" and "The Unbearable Lightness of Being." She gives a powerful performance of restrained emotion alternating with emotional outbursts.

After surviving her own tragedy — the death of her husband and young daughter in a car accident — Julie is frequently placed in the position of witnessing other people's tragedies, as if to help her figure things out.

Like the audience at the beginning

of the movie, she is often on the outside, looking in. Sometimes what she sees is horrific, other times ordinary.

Her reactions to what she sees are not always what one might expect, but this reflects the trauma anyone would feel after an accident. Before arranging to sell her house and every reminder of her family, and before ending her affair with her husband's associate, Julie asks her maid why she is crying. "Because you are not," the maid answers.

Julie witnesses the brutal beating of a man outside her apartment and does nothing to stop it. And when she accidentally locks herself out of her apartment after someone has pounded on her door threateningly, her first reaction is to laugh.

Or, in a lighter scene, she sees the

bandage on the face of her rental agent, recalling her own bandages and scars after the car accident, and asks him what happened. "My cat scratched me," he answers.

These small details allow the viewer to enter into the emotions of the movie. Those of us who have never had loved ones killed in a car accident or who have never had to survive a tragedy can still relate to cat scratches and getting locked out of our apartments.

The film is beautifully shot, frequently layering reflections on top of reflections, in the style of super-realist painting. When Julie visits her mother in a nursing home, we see Julie's reflection from outside the window, and her mother inside staring at the reflection of the TV screen, which

flashes scenes of tight-rope walkers and bungee jumpers: people on the verge of tragedies.

The act of discovering that her husband had a mistress, just as she had an extramarital affair, is a tragedy that may help Julie recover from the car accident. The director characteristically humanizes what could have been a melodramatic scene by having the two characters' encounter take place in a women's restroom, and by ending it with the mistress asking Julie to light her cigarette.

"Blue" is a powerful, moving film, sensual in its loving and lingering shots of its actors and of modern Paris. It is showing this weekend at the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater.

— Jim Cihlar