



PICARD (PATRICK STEWART) comes face to face with the Borg Queen (Alice Krige) in the science-fiction action thriller "Star Trek: First Contact." PHOTO COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES

## Performance teams humor, tense drama

Cast of 'Speed the Plow' delivers realistic production.

By LIZA HOLTMEIER  
Theater Critic

The Theatrix cast of "Speed the Plow" brought the world of Hollywood deal-making to life this weekend, while achieving an adequate balance between the comic and dramatic elements of Mamet's play.

The play opened with Charlie Fox, played by Jason Richards, arriving at the office of studio executive Bobby Gould, played by Michael Rothmayer. While making a deal for a big-time prison movie, Charlie and Bobby make a bet concerning whether or not Bobby could seduce his naive temporary secretary Karen, played by Lisa Mercer.

The fast pace and rapid delivery of lines between Rothmayer and Richards immediately pulled the audience in during scene 1. Their chemistry and stage camaraderie established the basis for their relationship for the rest of the show.

In the first scene, Rothmayer's self-assured posture, brash tone of voice and casual, flippant delivery of lines painted the picture of the consummate greedy Hollywood executive. Every time he thanked one of the characters, his subtext let the audience know that he thought the characters should really have been thanking him.

Every nuance of Richards' representation, from his walk to his gestures to his rambling delivery of lines, helped to create the image of a sneaky, selfish, cocky Hollywood producer. The way his thoughts and movements constantly shifted revealed the ulterior motives of Charlie Fox.

Mercer exhibited her ability to portray contrasting characteristics in her role as Karen. Through the timidity of her voice and gestures in Scene 1, she accentuated Karen's naivete and weakness. In Scene 2, however, her gestures and vocalization changed to reveal Karen's strength, intelligence and ability to manipulate. Despite the often too quiet delivery of her lines in Scene 2, she created a very intimate and intense moment in the play.

Scene 3 served as Rothmayer's chance to show his talent for contrast. He adjusted easily from vain to vulnerable as Bobby's former arrogance was replaced by confusion and distress over his relationship with Karen.

Richards' acting in Scene 3 was the highlight of the show. His tension and jumpy movement rounded out the character and motivation of Charlie Fox. Despite a couple contrived and unrealistic stage punches to Bobby, Richards added the final dimension to the relationship between Bobby and Charlie. Through his anger and mocking attitude, he epitomized the fickle, conniving, unscrupulous Hollywood deal maker.

The scenes of the play exemplified the manipulation skills of the power hungry. The entire cast skillfully delivered the comic lines of the play while keeping the characters and situations real.

# 'Generations' takes next step

Newest starship installment battles against popular enemy

### Movie Review

By GERRY BELTZ  
Film Critic

New ship. Same crew. Same enemy. New battleground.

"Star Trek: First Contact" once again brings our favorite starship crew into battle against their deadliest — and most popular — enemy, the Borg.

Director Jonathan Frakes doesn't wait for long to start the action. The movie has barely begun and the biological Erector sets have already set their mechanical crouton on course for conquering Earth.

Picard and crew are all set to go kick some Borg booty, but Starfleet orders the bald one to take the Enterprise over to the Neutral Zone to look at comets. Reasoning: Picard was once part of the Borg collective, so he may falter during battle.

However, Starfleet is eventually getting stomped like Mondale in '84, so Picard defies orders (surprise!) and gets into the fight.

On top of everything else, the Borg go back in time to keep Zephram Cochrane (James Cromwell, "Babe") from making his warp drive experimental run, thus changing history, and the Borg start taking over the Enterprise as well.

But there are some good things for the Enterprise crew; Geordi got rid of his hair-barette visor, Beverly Crusher dyed her hair again and Deanna Troi gets introduced to a funky new beverage called 'tequila.'

Overall, the movie works. Frakes creates a very nice blend of action, drama and comedy. There's also a few familiar 'Trek' faces showing up here and there throughout the film.

However, there are other characters to work with besides Picard and Data. Where the Batman movies are focusing on everyone but the lead character, the last two Star Trek movies are only looking at Picard and Data. Lest we forget about William "Eternal 2nd Banana" Riker or the budding romance between Troi and Worf?

Still, "Star Trek: First Contact" is a fun film to see and is a worthy addition to the "Star Trek" film legacy.

Check it out.

### The Facts

Film: "Star Trek: First Contact"  
Stars: Patrick Stewart, Brent Spiner, James Cromwell  
Director: Jonathan Frakes  
Rating: PG-13 (language, mild violence)  
Grade: B+  
Five Words: Picard takes on the Borg

Trekkies should be proud; 'First Contact' best film yet

### Movie Review

By CLIFF HICKS  
Film Critic

Let's be blunt — "Star Trek: Generations" was disappointing in a big way. But at least it got rid of the flesh-toned Enterprise D bridge.

"Generations," the first appearance of the "Star Trek: The Next Generation" cast, was a poor excuse for a film. It hung under the shadow of the old cast and tried to be an old "Star Trek" film.

Welcome to "The Next Generation."

"First Contact" pits Picard (Patrick Stewart) against the Borg and Data (Brent Spiner) against the Borg Queen, as the Borg attempt to stop Earth's first contact with an alien race in the past.

Is time travel getting to be a bit overused? Somewhat. Do the Borg look like the dark side of "Toy Story?" Sure. Does this stop the film from being perhaps the best "Trek" film yet? Not a chance.

The Enterprise E's bridge looks more like the bridge of a flagship. It is not the kind of bridge you'll find Wesley Crusher on.

In fact, the look of "First Contact" is a lot crisper all around. The special effects are sharper, the ships look sleeker and the Borg look really evil.

"First Contact" is, however, mostly performance driven. Once you get past the fact that this is a Picard-and-Data film (and that the rest of the crew members are just really excess baggage), there is some truly great acting in the film.

Spiner's performance as Data is, as always, impeccable. The added element of the emotion chip (which he can now turn on and off) makes him have to work a little harder for his salary, but there isn't a spot where he slips.

Stewart, however, gives the performance of a lifetime. A drawn tangent between Captain Picard and Captain Ahab (from Melville's "Moby Dick") leads Stewart into delivering a beautiful speech.

So, other than the fact that the rest of the crew are really just set pieces with lines, "First Contact" is the best "Star Trek" film in years, possibly ever.

Now we're boldly going where no one has gone before. Gene Roddenberry would be proud. Happy 30th birthday, "Star Trek."

### The Facts

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Director: Jonathan Frakes  
Cast: Patrick Stewart, Brent Spiner, James Cromwell  
Rating: PG-13 (violence, language)  
Grade: A-  
Five Words: Now THIS is boldly going