



**DRINK TANK**

You may be wondering what Science Fiction Film that lovely Mo Starkey cover is representing. The answer is... none. There's no 52 Weeks this issue. Why? Well, we're running the Blade Runner edition in Journey Planet, which doesn't come out for a couple of weeks, so I figured I'd use the time to catch my breath, watch some of the up-coming films (which includes things like a Bollywood film! A kids flick, and many many fun films!) and do an issue that is more traditionally Drink Tank, I guess.

One thing that I have to talk about is the Oscar nominations! I love the Oscars and this year I had a role to play! That role was programming four of the nominees in the Short Film category. Cinequest usually has one or two films in that get a nom, but four in one year (two showed at the 2011 fest, two will show at this year's) is a rarity.

One is certainly a Science Fiction film, one is a fantasy. The science fiction film is called Time Freak and it's a comedy. A funny comedy at that! The story is simple: a guy invents time-travel and then runs into a girl he has a thing for. He messes it up, so he goes back again. And then again. And again. This is a simple premise and they do it really well. I don't think it'll win, but it's at least worth watching.

The animated shorts has one of my favorite films of 2011 period called The Fabulous Slying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore. Made by the good people of Moonbot Studios, it's a film that, if there were justice, would be on the Hugo ballot for Dramatic Presentation Short Form. It's an amazingly beautiful film that appeals to lovers of film (it's main character is a sort of take-off on Buster Keaton and the story contains a great many references to The Wizard of Oz) and to anyone who loves books. It's such a great short and I am betting that it'll take it all home. The folks who made it are great folks too!

The film Wild Life is beautiful, painted, and a part of the animation programme from the good people at the National Film Board of Canada. Those guys do some great stuff and there are so many great filmmakers who owe their careers at the NFB. It shows this year.

The other one, Raju, is a German film that is in our student film series. That's tough - you're in college and you're already up for an Oscar. How you gonna top that? Then again, being a genius did set Orson Welles up for the rest of his life, so there's that.

This year's Cinequest is gonna be good stuff too! I'm excited. It's got some great films and I'm planning on spending a lot of time watching them. One of the films I did some consulting for, and a couple of others are from filmmakers that I've met over the years. The shorts programme is particularly strong. One of the programmes, the Animations, is the best I think I've ever got to be a part of! You can't go wrong with Animation!

So, what's this issue got in it? A couple of LoCs, a look at a few books that I've been sent, a special look at a movie that I passed over for 52 weeks from Juan Sanmiguel, a Taral Wayne piece and a few drips and drabs from my mind.

Plus... wrestling posters.

And I'll be talking a little bit more about the Hugos and the Oscars and wrestling and so on and so forth. It's what I do, right?

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Chris,

Sorry about your grandfather and your car. Cars are always causing trouble. I suppose they are less demanding than horses were. It's a shame that you didn't get to spend much time with your grandfather. I regret my grampy died before I reached my teens, but at least I knew him a little. I know how it is with families though. It isn't always the idealized picture. People are people, after all.

**Yeah, I've still got three (my Grandpa's third wife and both my Dad's parents) so I'm gonna give it a try to spend a little time with them in the next few months.**

As to locs, if you get responses on Twitter, Facebook and LJ then that's as good as LoCs. It's some reaction, some communication, some proof there's a readership. Maybe I should have been clearer about me seeing fanzines, or any kind of art, as communication. What I mean is that an artist addresses an audience. So there is some communication there, artist to audience, but if the audience never lets on then the artist can't be sure he isn't wasting his time and simply muttering or scribbling for himself. Now if a certain amount of the communication results in a bit of conversation that's even better, but if the only conversation is, "Here's my zine" followed by "Hey, enjoyed the zine," then that's justification.

**Indeed. The biggest criticism I've ever gotten, and in every thing I've ever done, is that I don't create for an audience. It's a problem I've been aware of for decades, and yet, it doesn't bother me...**

I try to avoid rating zines because they each have their own unique qualities to offer. But I consider Drink Tank right up there at the top. Aside from the tons of material you run, the zine reflects your personality (I guess, or am I wrong?!!!) and what you want to do. It is engaging the fun to read. To me that's what counts. With E-Ditto I just threw every issue together. As soon as I felt like doing an issue I grabbed a bit from here and a bit from there and whipped out a few other bits. The motivation was for me to have fun and I think quite a few readers like that.

**That's exactly how I do most of my issues! When there's a them, it's a bit different, but most of the time, it's just what happens!**

I don't see fanzines as great everlasting works of art. Although, I suppose if that's what a faned wants, then that's what his fanzine can aspire to. The point is, a fanzine should be what the editor wants, personally, as opposed to what he or she thinks it should be, or thinks other people want it to be. The beauty of fanzines is that, unlike work you are going to ask people to pay for, you can just mess around and relax and totally suit yourself.

**I tend to agree, though I see them as everlasting. if I didn't, I'd lose all my Museum Cred!**

You mention that even ezines have a kind of permanence and I admit, I did want to get a little of my stuff archived at eFanzines. That feels kind of cool.

**It does, doesn't it?**

Hmmmm....wait a minute...a loc about a reply to a loc commenting on loc...Do I see an infinite loop?

**Yes, it does. I always knew it would be a LetterCol that led to teh end of the world.**

Your article on Mad Max was interesting and reminds me that I saw the third movie but not the first. Not too unusual I guess. As for your albums, well, I loved the Pogues. I probably liked Rum, Sodomy and the Lash (the album!) best, although it lacked Bottle of Smoke which cracks me up. (actually I looked up the track listings and I could have sworn Bottle of Smoke was on the previous album. Oh well, who needs a memory when there's Wikipedia?)

***I've been going over the various albums I have, and there are a bunch of great albums. Perhaps I'll do a Top One Hundred someday!***

Glad to hear Taral is not just tossing out his furry zines. I threw out my fanzine collection when I moved years ago and regret it. Not that I could have hauled it around, but those zines might have delighted someone else the way they all did when they first arrived in my mailbox.

Best,

Eric

***Thanks, Eric!***

***And now, on the Albums, Mr. Warren Buff!!!!***

Once again, I find myself drawn to your top ten albums listing, and find myself wanting to respond in kind. That was one of the earliest LoCs I wrote (in issue 187), and so I'll reprise it here. I still have trouble ranking them, but I can at least give a good accounting of my favorites. I composed my list this time without referencing my previous letter to you, or jumping ahead and reading your list (I wanted my authentic favorites, after all -- not just what I used to like and a reflection of your tastes). Five wound up returning from the last list I sent you: Lola, Kind of Blue, Rumours (which I see you still have in the top slot), Keatsby Nights, and Quality Control. One old favorite from high school has made its way back into my list, Jethro Tull's Aqualung. The other four are albums I discovered in the time between these two letters.

***I love Jethro Tull, but my favorite album of theirs is Thick as a Brick. A long album of excellence!***

Thanks to Tim Miller of Dallas Fandom, I got turned onto Fairport Convention ("Oh, you listen to Richard Thompson? You need to hear Fairport Convention."), and easily latched onto Liege and Leif as a favorite album. Yeah, it's their huge album, and everyone who knows them likes it. But you know what? It's something I can share with new folks who've not heard them before, and be reasonably sure they'll like it even if they don't turn out to be Fairport Convention fans.

***I've never heard Fairport Convention, but I'm pretty sure I have a supporting membership...***

Thanks to a show on WKNC (my local college station) called "Mystery Roach", I came across The Monks, and fell in love with Black Monk Time. It's angry, driving, sarcastic music, and it's way before its time. And then I realized that I'd heard some of it before: in the scene in The Big Lebowski when Walter pulls his piece out on the lane, you can clearly hear "I Hate You Baby (But Call Me)" playing in the background. I think this album was simply meant to be one of my favorites.

***I love that song! I had no idea who did it, and I've never gotten around to buying the Big Lebowski's soundtrack, but now I must!***

Thanks to Chris Ross of Chapel Hill, I discovered The Protomen. They do rock opera based around a dystopic variation on the world of the Megaman game (as if Megaman wasn't dystopian enough already!), with strange sets of influences creeping in. Their self-titled debut is my favorite of their two albums, though the second shows improvements in storytelling (other than a few clear retcons of the first album -- but what good story would be complete without retcons?). "Unrest in the House of Light" is brilliant, and while the rest of the album only approaches it, it's all still very good.

***Looking up Protomen... searching... searching... ah, they look AWESOME!***

Finally, I stumbled onto Wanted! by The Outlaws on my own. I know it's not an album of entirely new material, as most of my usual favorites are, but it's four great musicians at the beginnings of productive careers (though I don't know how far Tompall Glaser went). "Honky Tonk Heroes" is easily my favorite song to sing, being the right mix of upfront and unashamed of living a little rough that makes it a blast to belt out. At least half of the songs on the album are such high grade material that they'd be a shame to leave off of their performer's set list. The rendition of "Suspicious Minds" on here is one of the few straight performances of the song that doesn't sound like it's trying to be Elvis, and I love it for that. And finally, there's "Put Another Log on the Fire", which I needed some time to realize was satire (and Shel Silverstein!) -- at first, it came off as simply unrepentant, but gradually I picked up on the significance of the line "Then come and tell me why you're leaving me." It's simply one of the best country albums out there (though Will The Circle Be Unbroken is perhaps better).

**Will The Circle Be Unbroken is a seminal work and one that I've owned at least twice in my life.**

And now we come to the difficulty of ranking. I'm going to try this, but won't ever really be satisfied with the results.

1. Lola
2. Kearsby Nights
3. Quality Control
4. The Outlaws
5. Liege and Leif
6. Black Monk Time
7. Aqualung
8. Kind of Blue
9. The Protomen
10. Rumours

Thanks again for giving me a reason to dig through the collection for this stuff. The biggest surprise to me is that no Beatles album made the list. I spent a lot of time listening to them the past two years, and really fell in love with their whole catalog, but when it came down to pick my favorites, even Abbey Road had a hard time making the cut (though Sgt. Peppers is much higher in my esteem than it used to be, too). I suppose this wouldn't be fun if it were much easier!

- Warren

***I love the Beatles, but on this list, they don't seem to make it. I think it's because the Beatles albums that I love the best are the compilations (like Beatles One), though both Revolver and Sgt. Pepper's are right up there. And teh wide-scale experimentation in The White Album is a good thing. They basically pre-saged punk with Helter Skelter you know?***

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# Stepchildren of Voltaire: The Anticipation Novelists of 1950s French Science Fiction

By Bradford Lyau

I probably don't have to mention that I am a fan of science fiction history. I write about it quite a bit, I love to talk about it, I am especially drawn to works about works I have no experience with. Whether it's writing about those authors I've never managed to get around to, like pretty much any writer of that form of Spanish Fantasy called Magical Realism or folks like Gordon Dickson or Robert Bloch. I especially love reading about those writers who are completely out of my view due to the fact that I don't got no language in me. Thus, Brad Lyau's *Stepchildren of Voltaire: The Anticipation Novelists of 1950s French Science Fiction* had a good leg up at the start.

Luckily, it did not squander it, or even need it. It is a remarkable look at a pack of writers who I knew almost nothing about (save for one guy who came across my path due to the presentation given by the late Lynn Williams at Emerson). The logical breakdown of the authors, the clear, yet nothing like boring, prose, and the wonderful amount of tie-in to authors I knew and loved made this an academic-ish work that I would recommend to my non-Ac friends!

Instead of lumping all the authors together and looking at the entire world of the Anticipation imprint chronologically, Brad took the logical step of putting them into four major groups: The Moderates, The Extremist, The Conservatives and the Radicals. It's a smart way of handling such a large batch of material and it gives us a handhold to start us up the mountain. The divisions aren't about ideologies, but about the reaction to the progress of the century in which they were living. These distinctions are the perfect. France after WWII was in a completely different headspace than America at the time. In fact, it would be fair to say that it was closer in thought to what many parts of Japan were going through (and they also developed a science fiction that dealt

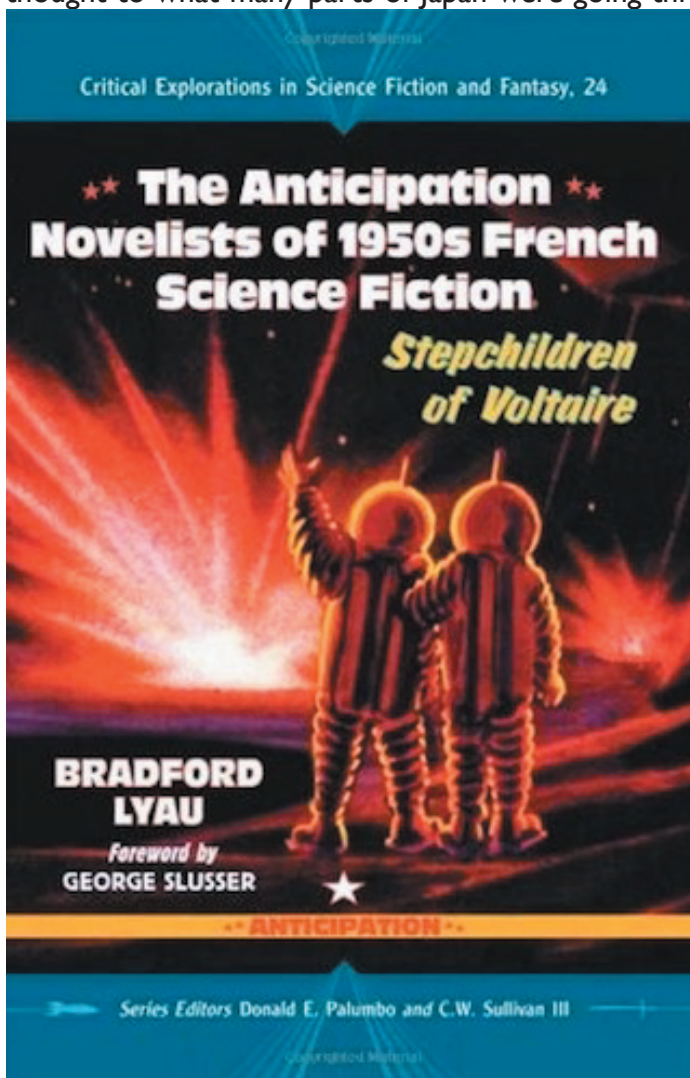
with the ideas of Progress in a very different way than American SF (see *Godzilla*). Brad examines the way they look at Progress as the defining feature of the period, and there is no question that is the right way to go, but more importantly, it allows us as the readers to make our conclusions on each author that much easier.

While the chapters on the Moderates and The Conservatives are strong enough, the one that moved me the most was that on The Extremist – Jimmy Guieu. His work is the only one I was kinda familiar with before approaching the book, and the analysis of his work and his vision was spot-on. Perhaps it is the fact that it is a chapter about one guy with one very clear vision that made it so good. Brad sums up the entire chapter, and the entirety of Guieu's work, perfectly – “if modernization policies cause France to stop being France, so be it.”

The perfect way to sum Jimmy up

The Bibliography and citations are amazing, and if anyone studying French were looking to get into francophone science fiction, this is the first place I'd send 'em. It's strong stuff that really gives a look at what they might wanna get into.

This one is already on my Hugo nomination list. It's a strong piece of work and one that I'm sure will be used by reference types for years to come. It's from McFarland, so it's a bit pricey, but it is worth every penny.



# Expedition to the Mountains of the Moon by Mark Hodder

Sir Richard Burton was, without question, every bit as interesting as the other Richard Burton. Moreso, some would say, though he failed to marry Elizabeth Taylor. I don't care that she wasn't born for more than 30 years after he died! The number of men she married should have meant that he could have if he really tried! When I first read the description of Hodder's first two books, I was interested, but never got around to reading them, so I started with *The Expedition to the Mountains of the Moon*.

And I'm pretty glad I did.

The story goes along in some very smart ways. The Germans have mastered Eugenics, what we'd call bio-engineering, and can manage to adapt plants and animals to all their purposes. Richard Burton is in two places at once: 1863 London and 1913 Africa. He's serving as King's Agent (even though the Crown is empty as no suitable heir can be found after the assassination of Queen Victoria) in the Nineteenth Century and has no clue how he ended up in the Twentieth Century trenches of World War I; a World War I that is being fought in Africa with German weird killer plants. In the Nineteenth Century, Prime Minister Lord Palmerston has charged Burton to go to Africa and recover some magic diamonds. It's a pair of simple stories populated with fascinating characters. In the Nineteenth Century, we get to hang with folk like Isabella Mayson, who in the Universe here is the leader of a band of ferocious woman warriors, and Algernon Swinburne, poet and Good Time Charlie in extremis. He's a lot of fun. There's also Palmerston, the power-mad Prime Minister who refuses to grow old gracefully, and Isambard Kingdom Brunel, now a steam-powered man (and the description of him reminded me a lot of Boilerplate). In the Twentieth Century, we're treated to some guy named Bertie Wells, a journalist, and his editor, Oscar Wilde (who also appears in the Nineteenth Century, briefly) and to Alastair Crowley, who is England's greatest psychic weapon, of sorts. Bad guys include Zeppelin and Generalmajor Lettow-Vorbeck, not to mention some guy named Nietzsche. It's a great cast of characters.

And here is a point that I really have to hammer home - these are, for the most part, real historical personages and Hodder is treating them with a mix of respect and imagination. It is not always an easy thing to do. The best at it, in my eyes at least, is Philip Jose Farmer, who did it a lot, including with Sir Richard Burton in his Riverworld stories, and always got a good result. Hodder measures up favorably.

One thing I appreciated was that Hodder chose to treat his characters not with the kid gloves of today, but with a more typical of Nineteenth Century attitudes towards just about everything... save for Burton, who seems a little more 'with it' in his opinions on gender, race, sexuality and so forth. Not completely, but enough that it is a bit refreshing without being the cloying cleaned-up versions of the 1800s that so many Steampunk authors tend to present. The attitudes here seem a little more than the nice side of what you were likely to find among the Upper Crust of the time, but not so much that it becomes annoying.

The prose is rich, at times dense, and Hodder uses it brilliantly. When we are trekking through the jungles with Burton & Co., the reading can be slow, heavy, thick and the jungles he describes so well. When time has to speed up, so does the reading. This does slightly work against the benefit of the story in the latter stages, I felt as if we were skating past a great deal of stuff in order to keep the book at a manageable size.

I had a few moments where I was pulled out by moments in history. The Source of the Nile becomes something of a problem, actually. This was an important plot point, and there was a simple factual problem that I won't get into because it would give a great deal away. Let me just say I was eager to have an obvious statement made and when it wasn't, I was annoyed. If you've got any knowledge of Exploration of Africa in the 1800s, you'll come to the same question.

The Germans here are wonderfully mad, as is Palmerston and just about anyone else with any power whatsoever. That plays well with today, of course, and I was howling at times with the way the German commanders were presented. I could practically here Christoph Waltz's voice coming out of the Generalmajor while he was informing Burton of his darkest plans. It was pretty awesome, too!

All in all, I enjoyed reading *The Expedition to the Mountains of the Moon*, and have started in on the two previous books in the series. I think Hodder has a definite eye on things and his prose is strong. He's an author I am more than excited to know is out there doing great stuff!

# The Thorn and the Blossom by Theodora Goss

Some books are hard to read. This is one of them, but not for the reasons you think. Theodora Goss' book *The Thorn and the Blossom* from the good people at Quirk is a lovely pair of entwined stories. The stories are about Evelyn and Brendan, sweethearts who meet and fall in love and have... well, much more would be giving away too much. The Green Knight features prominently, and it's a good tale and I found myself falling for Evelyn just as hard as Brendan. Theodora writes her characters so sweetly, so powerfully that I really found myself attaching to them. The finish is also one of the strongest I've read. The two stories add up to a Novella, maybe even a Novelette, but it's enough to be an excellent read.

But there is a problem – it's not easy to read.

You see, the good folks at Quirk had the idea to release a book in accordion-page format. That is there is a front and a back cover, they are connected by fan-fold pages, one side of which is Evelyn's story, the other is Brendan's story. Supposedly you can read either on first, but I really think it works best with Brendan's story going first and then Evelyn's. The stories are illustrated with lovely work from Scott McKowen. The art is lovely, but it was while trying to encounter the art up-close that I started to have a problem.

The book kept slipping.

Since the two covers are only connected by the fan-fold pages, they would slip very easily. I eventually set the book on the ground, propped myself up on some pillows and viewed it from above, pulling the story across as I finished a page. It was a strange way to it, but it worked. If I had a scroll I'd probably read it the same way! In fact, good people at Quirk, I DEMAND a scroll book next!

The entire set-up is lovely, a marvelous artifact. This is a book that had a gimmick, and apparently the gimmick came first, which is usually a bad sign but here it worked so well. The end product delivered was amazingly beautiful and the story is very nice. The only problem was the way I had to read it. Still, from the slip cover to the book itself, it's a wonderful piece! I'd say you should buy it!





## Star Trek: The Motion Picture by Juan Sanmiguel

I asked Chris Garcia if he was going to include **Star Trek: The Motion Picture** in “The 52 Weeks to Science Fiction Literacy” segment in his fanzine, *The Drink Tank*. Chris said it was one of many films that did not make the final cut. He asked if I could write a defense for keeping the film on the list. I said yes. One note: I will be basing my opinions on the director’s cut that was released on DVD in 2001, the definitive version of the film.

I was a “second generation” fan of **Star Trek**. I first saw the show in syndication. I saw the whole series several times before the film came out. I was really excited when the news of the film was coming out. There was going to be new Trek for the first time in years.

One of the film’s problems was the fact the script was not finished before filming started. Paramount was determined to get the film out by the end of 1979, for business purposes. This affected the whole production. This was the only film that Academy Award-winning director Robert Wise did not screen in front of a test audience before the final release. The biggest consequence of this was that the film’s pacing was off. The film loses the audience when the *Enterprise* enters the cloud. The time between going into the cloud and the probe scene was way too long. In the director’s cut, Wise cuts back that part and keeps the story going.

Another of the film’s problem was the story itself. It was loosely-based on a script idea from Alan Dean Foster that was going to be used in a proposed new Trek series which got shelved when Paramount decided to make a movie. The idea of intelligent machines going out of control was explored in at least four of the original-series episodes and two episodes of the animated series. This story was on a bigger scale than could be done on television, but the film makers should have anticipated the complaints about reusing old story ideas. This may have been the result of the studio’s insistence in getting a film out as quickly as possible, even though other writers, like Harlan Ellison, also pitched story ideas.

The story was also one of the film’s strengths. The film was aiming for that classic Science Fiction sense of wonder. We are given a mysterious object heading for Earth. All that is known about the object is that it has incredible destructive power. The *Enterprise* is sent to investigate. We discover that the object is controlled by a machine-being named V’Ger. V’Ger is coming to Earth to find its creator in order to ask the same existential questions we all ask questions that Spock too has been asking his entire life. Early in the film we find that Spock left Starfleet to study the highest Vulcan discipline, the Kolinhar, which will completely purge him of all emotion. Encountering V’Ger’s thoughts, Spock finds a well-tuned mind which may provide him the answers he seeks. When Spock gets to see V’Ger’s mind up close, he discovers that V’Ger is still looking for the same answers. Spock is so moved by V’ger’s frustration that he sheds tears for V’Ger. That scene was cut from the original theatrical release. This is one of the biggest blunders of the production team. That scene made the film a real

personal story. Spock rarely let his emotional guard down in the original series. He learns from V'Ger that logic is not enough for big questions of life. This led to a Spock who is more comfortable with himself in the latter films. In the 2009, film Spock tries to convey what he learns to his younger self so this younger self may enjoy the contentment he found later.

The music for this film is incredible. Legendary composer Jerry Goldsmith put together a powerful score for the film. **Star Trek: The Motion Picture** was one of the last films to have an overture that had a very epic feel setting up the big ideas to be encountered in the film. The Klingon battle sequence had a very martial feel, the music conveying the fact we watching a warrior race in action. During that sequence, there are very forceful and harsh tones when the mysterious cloud appears, indicating that there is something powerful inside of it. Those tones appear in the Vulcan sequence, when Spock encounters V'Ger's mind. Vulcan's music has a very calm and peaceful sound until Spock rejects the offer to banish all emotion and sets his life in a different direction. When we see Kirk for the first time, we hear the full crescendo of the main theme. When Kirk inspects the *Enterprise*, the music starts low and slowly builds up as we see more of the new refitted *Enterprise*. This gradual build up happens again in the sequence where Decker joins with V'Ger. This makes it feel as if something powerful and important is happening. This soundtrack blew me away, more than John Williams' scores for **Star Wars** and **Superman**. This was the first soundtrack album I bought.

The effects in the original version were incredible. The problem was that many thought the effects overwhelmed everything else. There were also problems putting the effects together and some of the work was rushed. For the director's cut, the team from Foundation Imaging, the same group that worked on **Baby-lon 5** and **Star Trek: Voyager**, got to work on the effects. They were able to fix some of the effects and add some new ones. They did the latter seamlessly since it was the intention of the team not put anything that looked anachronistic in the film. One scene they were able to fix was the formation of a walkway between the *Enterprise* and V'Ger. Originally the *Enterprise* seemed to park next to V'Ger. Now a path forms between the two. It looks spectacular.

Despite all the problems, the original theatrical version of film succeeded. The only negative outcome from the first film was that Paramount was a bit more cautious with the budgets of the sequels. The rest of the films from the classic era were good and tried to handle big topics and focused on the characters. Those successes would lead to the expansion of the Trek universe in 1987 with the start of the television series **Star Trek: The Next Generation**. **Star Trek** became a major player in the world of media science fiction with this film.

"The human adventure was just beginning."

