

# TIME TROUBLES IN STAR TREK



**Tomorrow is Yesterday** Captain John Christopher spots the Enterprise

ON only four occasions did episodes from the original live action **Star Trek** series deal with Time travel, despite the concept being introduced as early as the seventh episode, *The Naked Time*. However, the animated **Star Trek** and episodes of the proposed **Star Trek II** series together with some intriguing **Trek** movie script outlines also make interesting cases for study...

Returning to *The Naked Time*... This early episode, which was the precursor to **Star Trek: The Next Generation's** *The Naked Now*, featured the crew of the starship Enterprise battling with a mind-altering disease while the ship plummeted towards a dying planet. At the very last moment, control of the ship is regained and the engines fired back up so that they can make their escape. In an excellent 'twist' ending the starship's engines go into 'an anti-matter imbalance' and as well as travelling through Space away from the planet, the Enterprise travels back in Time as well.

The die seemed cast — having discovered the correct intermix reaction to produce Time travel the crew could use it regularly. This proved not to be the case



**Tomorrow is Yesterday** Captain Kirk introduces 20th Century airforce pilot John Christopher to the wonders of the 23rd Century

and, in fact, when Time travel was next used in episode 21, the method of propelling the crew into past ages was very different.

## Tomorrow Is Yesterday

*Tomorrow is Yesterday* was written by the excellent **Trek** author DC Fontana and features the Enterprise arriving at Earth in the 1960s quite by accident after a collision with a "black sun". Perhaps this is supposed to mean a black hole, but whatever dodgy Science the premise rests on, it was this episode which laid the foundation of **Star Trek's** "sling-shot" effect. Movie viewers will remember that this fictional idea allowed the crew to reach San Francisco in the 1980's for **Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home**.

In *Tomorrow is Yesterday*, the Enterprise arrives at Earth and is spotted by a military aeroplane, which photographs the 'futuristic' craft. Trying to evade detection, the starship causes the jet to break up and so must rescue its pilot. Obviously, this dabbling with history must be put right, and so this forms the main thrust of the episode. In the process of trying to correct everything, things go

even more wrong when Captain Kirk is caught by the Earth authorities and interrogated.

The episode itself is a highly competent piece of entertainment and displays all the usual strengths and, unfortunately, associated weaknesses usually encountered with Time travel in Science Fiction. One priceless scene features a dumbfounded military guard beamed to the Enterprise where he samples the delights of the Enterprise's home cooking! Had it been the only Time travel adventure produced by the series, no one could have complained since it captured the flavour of the sub-genre perfectly. Seven episodes later, however, **Star Trek** produced what could well be the finest piece of Time travel storytelling ever to reach a tv or cinema screen.

## The City on the Edge of Forever

Throughout **Star Trek's** first season, the series could hardly do any wrong. Yet even in this spirit of 'quality', one or two episodes stood head and shoulders above the rest; *The City on the Edge of Forever* was one such episode.



**Assignment: Earth** Kirk calls for help while Spock restrains the panic-stricken Roberta Lincoln, secretary of the mysterious Gary Seven

Today's audiences are used to the overly complex nature of Time travel as featured in the **Back to the Future** trilogy, however, the brilliance of *The City on the Edge of Forever* lies in the simplicity of its concept.

While studying "ripples in Time" — perhaps the gravitational radiation predicted by Einstein's General Theory of Relativity which contemporary astronomers are now seeking — the Enterprise is buffeted so violently that

Doctor McCoy accidentally injects himself with an overdose of a drug. The overdose produces feelings of acute paranoia and McCoy flees the ship. Searching for him, the landing party comes across The Guardian of Forever, which proves to be a portal into the Past. McCoy evades capture by jumping through the guardian and being transported back to America in the 1930's. Instantly, the Enterprise ceases to exist and Future history is changed. Kirk and Spock go after McCoy to fetch him back

and stop him from interfering with the Past. In the Thirties, they end up in the employ of Miss Edith Keeler, a young charity worker of extraordinary vision. Try as he might, Kirk cannot help but fall in love with her and announces this just as Spock discovers that, to return the Twenty-third Century to normal, Edith Keeler must die...

Originally written by Harlan Ellison and extensively re-written by an uncredited **Star Trek** staff writer, possibly Gene Roddenberry himself or perhaps DC Fontana, this episode is a masterpiece of Science Fiction storytelling. The depth of Kirk's complex character has seldom been better and the interplay between Kirk and Spock shows just what chemistry these two can create.

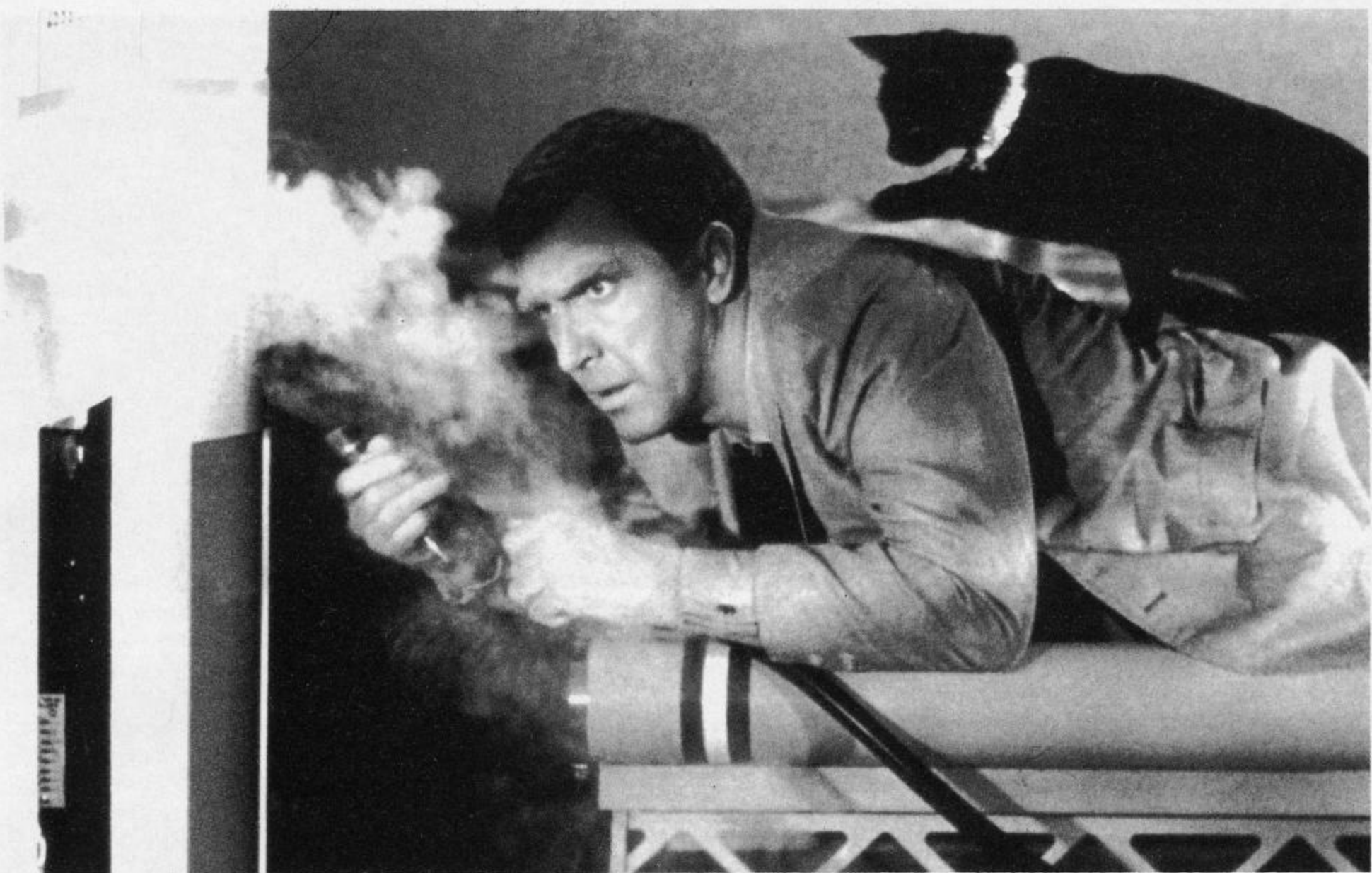
### Assignment: Earth

Time travel did not appear in **Star Trek** again until the end of the second season when *Assignment: Earth* was produced. This was a craftily disguised pilot episode for a new television show starring Robert Lancing as Gary Seven and Terri Garr as his scatty assistant, Roberta Lincoln.

The Enterprise has used the 'sling shot' to travel back through Time in order to study the late 1960s and discover just how Earth managed to survive all the various crises of that era. While in orbit around the

**The City on the Edge of Forever** Back in the 1930s Depression era, Kirk and Spock attempt to put history on its proper course. Spock uses his skills to create a tricorder monitor device to keep them informed of historical developments





**Assignment: Earth** Gary Seven and his companion Isis try to prevent America's launching of an orbital atomic bomb

Earth, they intercept the transporter of a being who is journeying from a remote world to our planet in order to help us. Although appearing human, Gary Seven, is accompanied by a very non-human helper — Isis, the cat with strange powers! Gary Seven will not reveal much about himself or his purpose on Earth, and Kirk does not know whether he is a friend who should be trusted or an alien set on destroying the Earth. As the backdrop, Mankind comes to the brink of World War III.

This episode presents an enjoyable story, even though the main cast are somewhat overshadowed by the writers' introducing us to Seven and Lincoln. Unfortunately the network did not pick up the **Assignment: Earth** series and so the episode remains as a stand-alone adventure.

## All Our Yesterdays

**Star Trek** went on to produce its third season and along with it, its final live action Time travel episode. *All Our Yesterdays* was approached somewhat differently to the others since the Past the crew returned to was not Earth's, but the threatened planet Sarpeidon's. An interesting premise had Kirk, Spock and McCoy in a library reviewing data discs containing images of the Past histories of the planet. When stepping through the

Time portal (cunningly disguised as a doorway!) they are instantly transported into the Time period they were last viewing.

Kirk found himself in the medieval era and Spock and McCoy in the ice age. The episode then detailed the way in which the officers find each other and return to Sarpeidon's here and now. It also featured a silly side plot in which Spock reverted to the ways of emotion because he had

gone back so far in the Past that his ancestors on Vulcan would still be savages; rather illogical!

Kirk has the most interesting time, being stuck in the medieval period, although it does not make too much sense to suppose that every planet goes through the same historic periods as the Earth has done. However, setting the Time travel on a different planet to Earth means that the impact is somewhat reduced.

**The City on the Edge of Forever** Spock's makeshift tricorder monitor displays the news of the 'fateful' events which will knock history off course



In most of these episodes the writers found new and different ways for the crew to be propelled backwards in Time and, for the most part, this kept the episodes fresh and entertaining.

## Yesteryear

In the animated episodes DC Fontana wrote *Yesteryear* which used Time travel as a rather blatant plot device with which to explore the young Spock's origins on Vulcan. The story is, without doubt, excellent and it is a pity it was not expanded to an hour long live-action show.

While using the *Guardian of Forever* for historical research, Kirk and Spock return to their present to find all traces of Spock's existence gone — the *Enterprise* even has an Andorian first officer. Reviewing records, Spock finds that in this altered Time-line he died during the Kahs-wan; the Vulcan coming of age ritual. Spock clearly remembers, however, that a distant Vulcan cousin, Selek, rescued him. To return the Time-line to normal, Spock resolves to return to Vulcan, through the *Guardian*, and save his own life by posing as his distant cousin, Selek.

## Almost Time Travel...

After *Star Trek* finished its live action and animated runs it was almost resurrected as a small-scale motion picture in 1975. Although not a Time travel story, this first motion picture outline featured as its climax the crew of the *Enterprise* returning to Earth only to find the script's god-like entity has made them all younger and transported them back in Time to when the *Enterprise* had just completed its original five year mission.

The author, Gene Roddenberry, went on to write a second outline with Jon Povil when his first was rejected by Paramount. This time he opted for an out-and-out Time travel story which retained some of the quasi-religious aspects of the first story. The story opens with all the crew of the *Enterprise* dead! The bodies are adrift in an amorphous plasma being in Space which begins returning them to life. They discover they have been dead for eleven years and that Spock and Scotty are still missing. The Time-line has been altered so that when the *Enterprise* returns to Earth it finds a totalitarian society.

Spock is located on Vulcan where he has been plagued by memories of his past life ever since disappearing through a 'Time gap' in the transporter beam together with Scotty and a landing party. Scotty is finally located, having become the most powerful man on Earth and the one responsible for the Time troubles. Kirk



**All Our Yesterdays** McCoy and Spock are trapped in the planet Sarpeidon's Past with only a fur blanket and a woman for company



**Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home** Once again, Kirk and Spock visit the 20th Century to save the Future!

and the *Enterprise* set out to put everything back to rights again.

The plot is very involved and this brief résumé goes no way towards conveying the actual storyline. Had it been filmed it would have featured James Doohan's Mister Scott heavily in the second half and required actors to portray Hitler, Churchill, Mao Tse Tung, Albert Einstein and John F Kennedy!

When this script idea was rejected by Paramount, writers Allan Scott and Chris Bryant were hired. They penned a curious tale with overtly Von Daniken (*Chariots of the Gods*) ideas that Man's early evolution had been influenced by ancient astronauts. The ancient astronauts being the crew of the *Enterprise* who have plunged through a black hole and arrived at Earth in the time of Cro-Magnon man!

Shortly after this, the motion picture idea was dropped altogether and *Star*

*Trek* became a television series once again. *Star Trek II* would have featured a Time travel story called *Tommorrow and the Stars* by Larry Alexander. This featured elements of a story called *The Apartment*, which had been written for the proposed, but never filmed, *Genesis II* series. Due to a transporter malfunction Kirk is transported back to the 1940s just before Pearl Harbor. What follows is a story that contains some obvious parallels to *The City on the Edge of Forever*, especially Kirk falling in love with the female guest character, Elsa Kelly. While Kirk gets friendly with Elsa, Xon (Spock's replacement) and the rest of the *Enterprise* crew struggle to retrieve him.

Of course, Time travel finally returned to the *Star Trek* universe with the 1988 feature film *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*.

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