

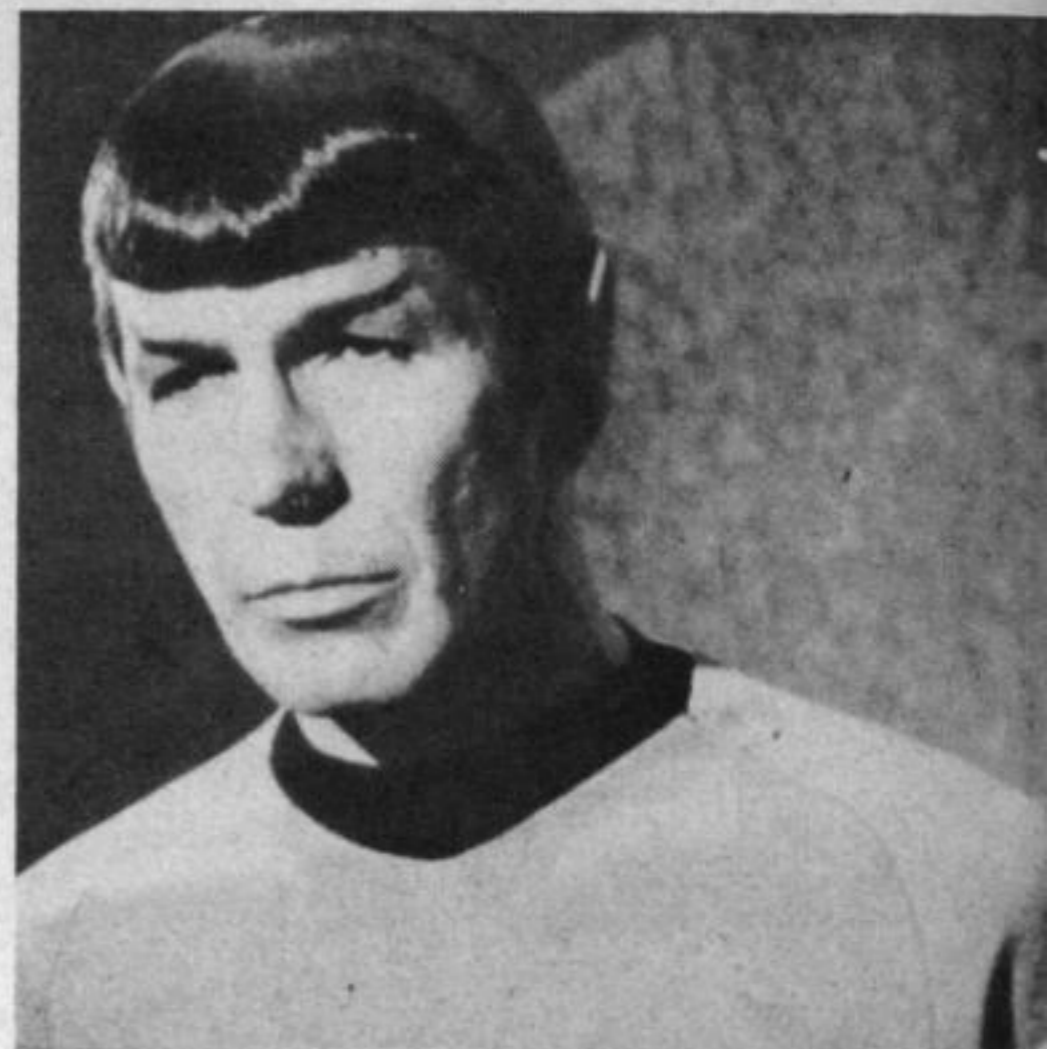
SPOCK

PART ONE—HIS STORY

by **Elmo Kruger**



Spock, using a Vulcan Louisville Slugger, executes a perfect squeeze bunt.



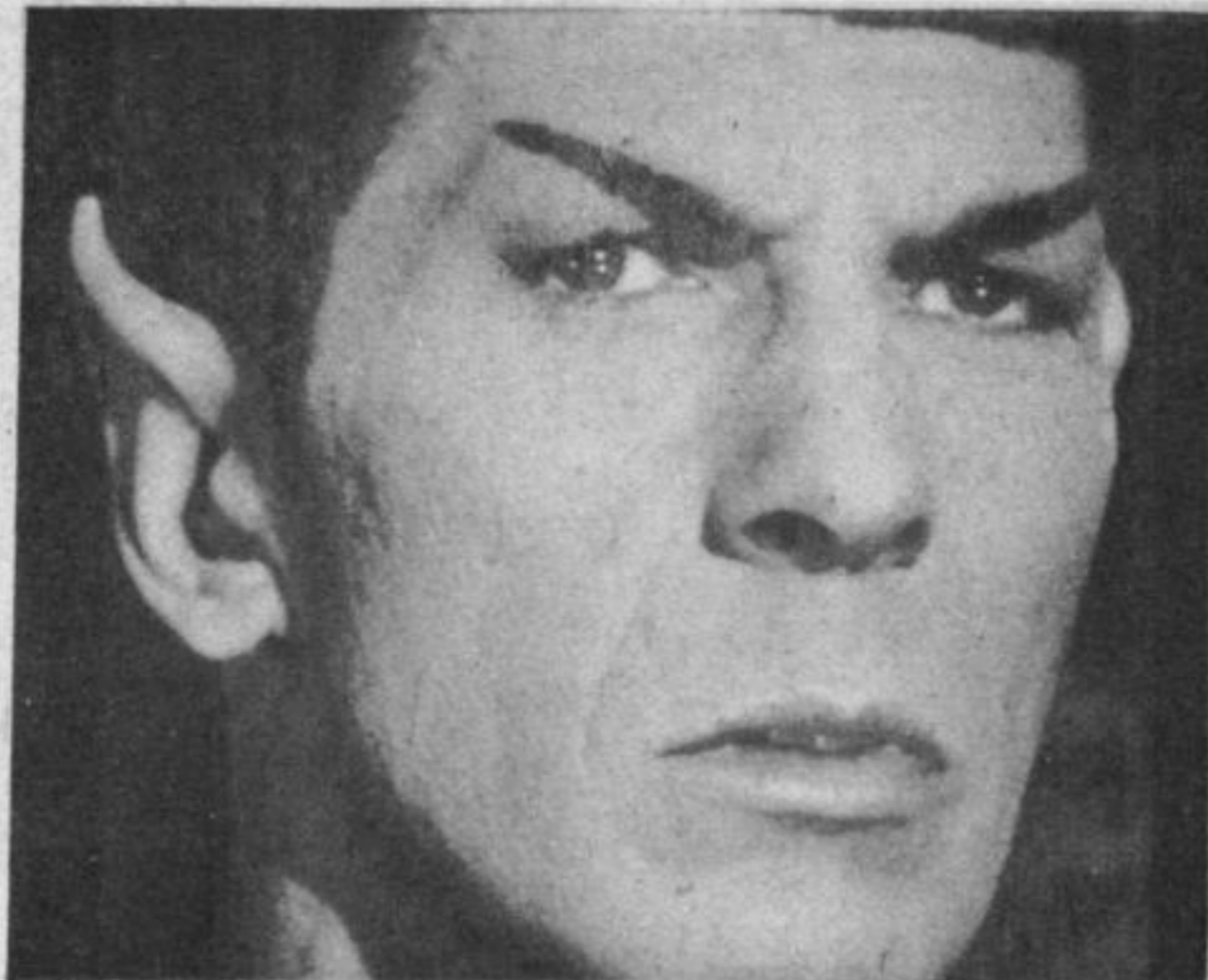
Mr. Spock and the series he was derived from, "Star Trek," have become science fiction landmarks. Most everyone knows a little about him but who is Spock really? What is his history? Why does he remain such a compelling and charismatic figure? Stephen E. Whitfield answers these questions and an assortment of others in his comprehensive book entitled "The Making of Star Trek" (Ballantine, \$1.95; —a virtual Trekkie's bible.

As far back as 1960, six years before "Star Trek" hit the air, Gene Roddenberry, the show's creator, described the character simply as an alien "with a red-hued satanic look and surprisingly gentle manners." For the series' first pilot episode in 1964 ("Star Trek" was unusual in that two separate pilots were made for NBC before they were finally satisfied enough to insert it into their regular schedule) Leonard Nimoy, a little-known but hard-working actor, was chosen to play the part. A year or two earlier, Nimoy had a role in an episode of "The Lieutenant," another Roddenberry creation, which had made an impression on Gene. When the problem of casting for an alien presented itself, his first choice was Nimoy.

Since Spock is from another planet, it was decided he had to have some physical characteristics to set him apart from the others—hence, the pointed ears. Getting the right kind of ears, though, turned out to be a sur-

prisingly difficult task. Nimoy tried on many different pairs of ears but all of them were unsatisfactory in some regard—too pointy, too flat, too large, etc. Actual test footage was made just to see how the different pairs looked on film. The crew began to kid Nimoy about his strange condition—in a good-natured way, of course—by calling him such things as "Jackrabbit" and "Pixie." But the serious-minded actor was unsettled by the remarks and began to have doubts about playing a pointy-eared "freak." He expressed these feelings to producer Roddenberry, indicating his displeasure over the unwanted comedic aspects of the ears, and added, "I've decided I don't want the part." Since this came only a few days before the scheduled start of shooting, Roddenberry was aware that he simply had to talk Nimoy out of his resignation. For thirty minutes they argued—the producer telling the actor that the part had great dignity and Nimoy was the only man who could carry it off—but Leonard stuck to his guns. As a last resort, the producer proclaimed, "Leonard, look, believe me. I make this pledge to you. If by the thirteenth show you still don't like the ears, I will personally write a script in which you will get an ear job and go back to normal." The joke broke the ice between the two and the problem was never heard from again.

After the first pilot, called "The Menagerie," NBC suggested a few changes con-



cerning Spock that Roddenberry resisted. The network believed that the character looked too much like the devil, that no one would be able to relate to him or to any alien, for that matter. Roddenberry, on the other hand, felt that the "hint of evil" in Spock would attract great numbers of the female audience. Furthermore, as far as not being able to relate to an alien is concerned, every one of us is an alien in one way or another, said the producer, and we all have an immensely difficult time in communicating. In that way, Spock is no different from us.

But NBC still was not convinced and, in asking for a second pilot, urged that the character of Spock be dropped altogether. Roddenberry, however, steadfastly refused to do the show without Spock, claiming that a futuristic science fiction program based in outer space had to have an alien on board. The network finally relented to the producer's wishes, but please, they cried, keep him "in the background."

After the series had been sold, NBC had their art department touch up photographs of Spock to make him look more like an earthling—his ears and eyebrows were rounded. Fortunately, the network got some new program executives who were very high on the Vulcan and wanted to know from the producer why he had the character playing such a subordinate role. Roddenberry replied that the previous executives pressured him into such a move, and then pulled out the

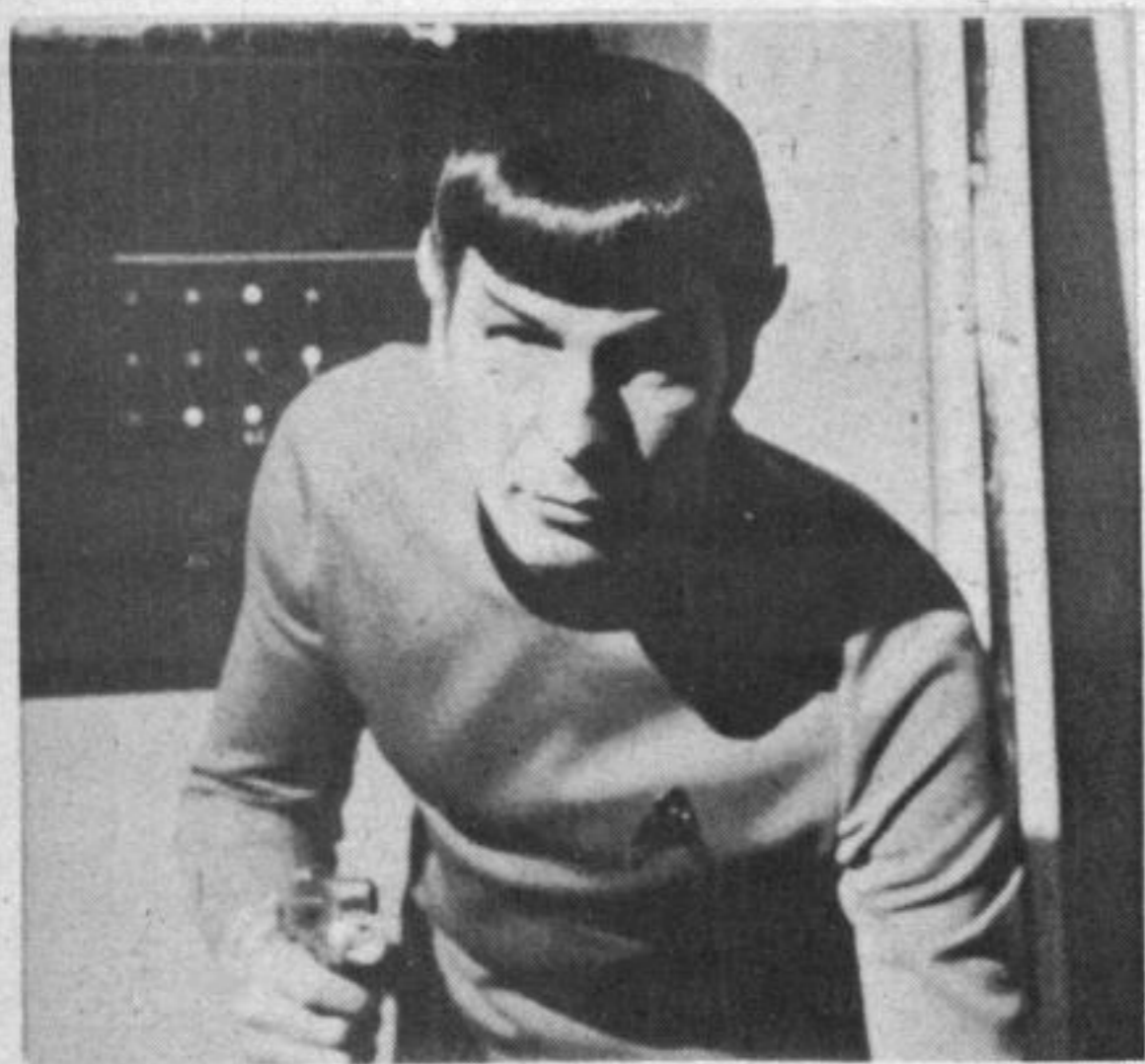
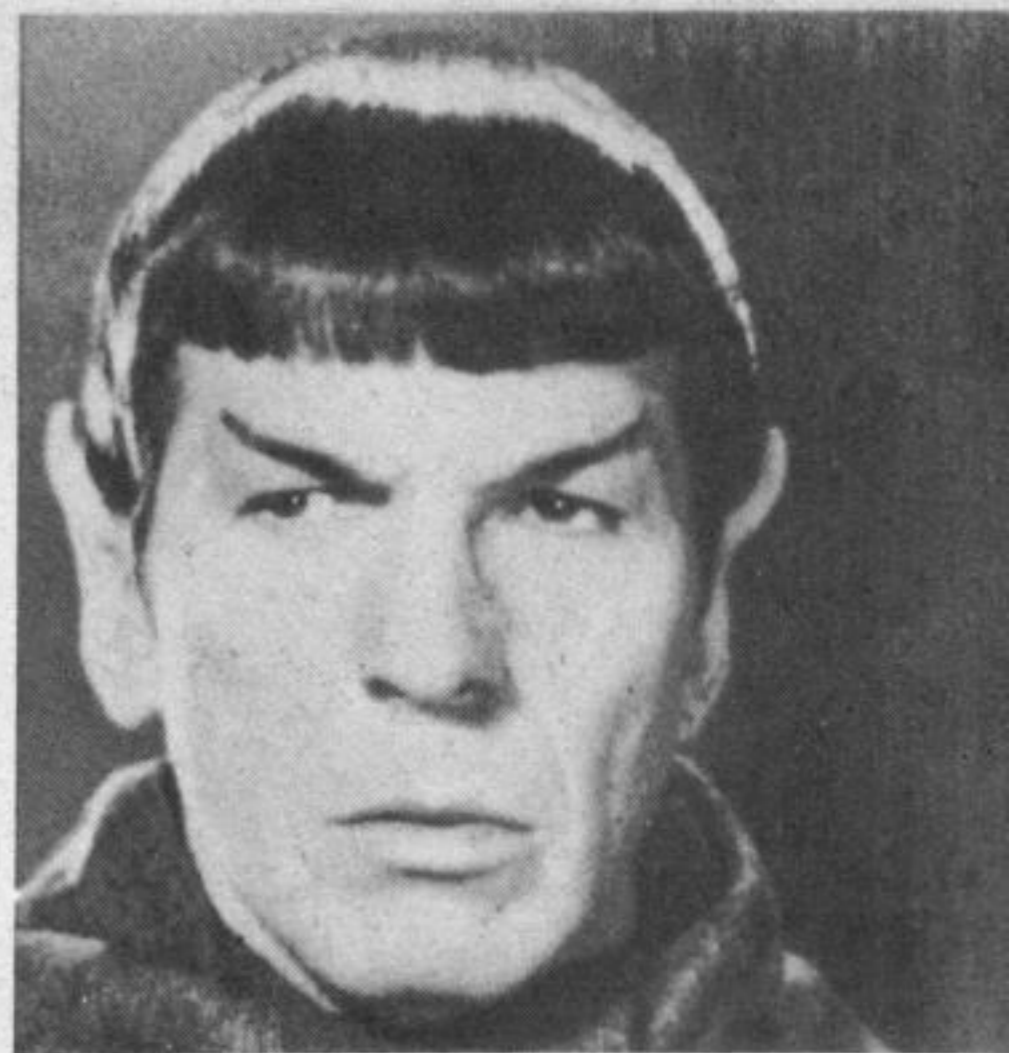
doctored photographs to prove his point.

Personality-wise, there was a marked change in Spock from the first pilot to the second. In the first, he showed a variety of emotions similar to those of an earthling. It was later decided that Spock would take on the cold, unemotional demeanor of another character that was to be dropped. So, by the second pilot, he was pretty much his recognizable self, as well as being upped from fourth in command to second, as Chief Science Officer of the Enterprise.

Once the show was underway full-time, Roddenberry realized he had to provide solutions to a lot of unanswered questions involving Spock, as to his characteristics and his life prior to joining the Enterprise.

Spock is the son of an Earth-born mother and a Vulcan-born father—an unusual but not unique combination. Although he is a blend of the two races, he exhibits far more of the latter than he does the former. His major physical differences can be explained thusly: his strength is greater than ours because the gravity on the planet Vulcan is much greater than that on Earth, and the ears are more developed due to a thinner Vulcan atmosphere.

Sarek, Spock's father, is a Vulcan ambassador and former physicist who is 102 years old—middle-aged in Vulcan years. His mother, Amanda, a former school teacher, married Sarek even though Vulcans cannot really show the emotion of love.



Sarek and Spock suffered a severe blow to their relationship over the latter's choice of a career. Sarek wanted his son to attend the Vulcan Science Academy—as he did—in order to become a scientist and better serve his people. But Spock realized that if he went to the science academy he would be faced with a great deal of discrimination due to his half-and-half parentage. Since this condition was not present at the space academy, Spock went there and later joined the space service, completely alienating his father. It took a family crisis to bring the two together following an 18 year silence. After many years, Sarek now understands his son's special problems.

Spock's Vulcan side accounts for many of his powers. His five senses are more highly developed than the average Earthling's, and his ability to control pain is total. Vulcans are firm believers in non-violence, but this does not mean they will not kill. They can kill if it proves absolutely necessary. One of Spock's most powerful weapons, though, is his "pinch"—an application of the fingers at a spot between the shoulder and the neck that produces immediate unconsciousness. Spock also has a special telepathic power—known as "mind melding"—in which his mind and that of another become "one." It is his way of reading a mind, but a power that requires an incredible amount of concentration. Hence, he employs it only sparingly.

For a Vulcan, logic is everything and emotion is nothing. All decisions must be based solely on logic—emotions interfere with that

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process and therefore must be blocked out. This is something that is taught from birth, and has made Spock's planet so much more peaceful than Earth, where many emotional wars have sprung up.

It is the human side of Spock that causes him difficulty and creates such inner conflict. He is more vulnerable to emotion than full-blooded Vulcans and therefore must work harder in suppressing his feelings.

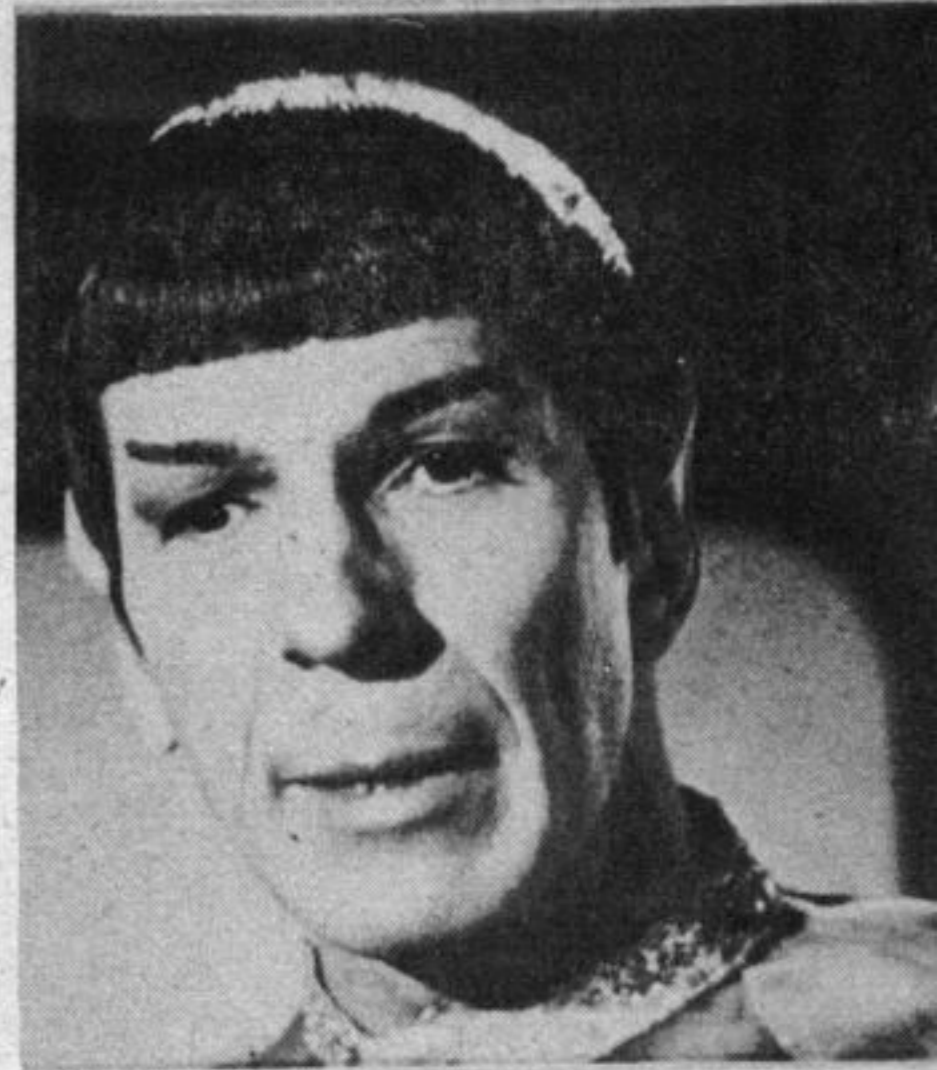
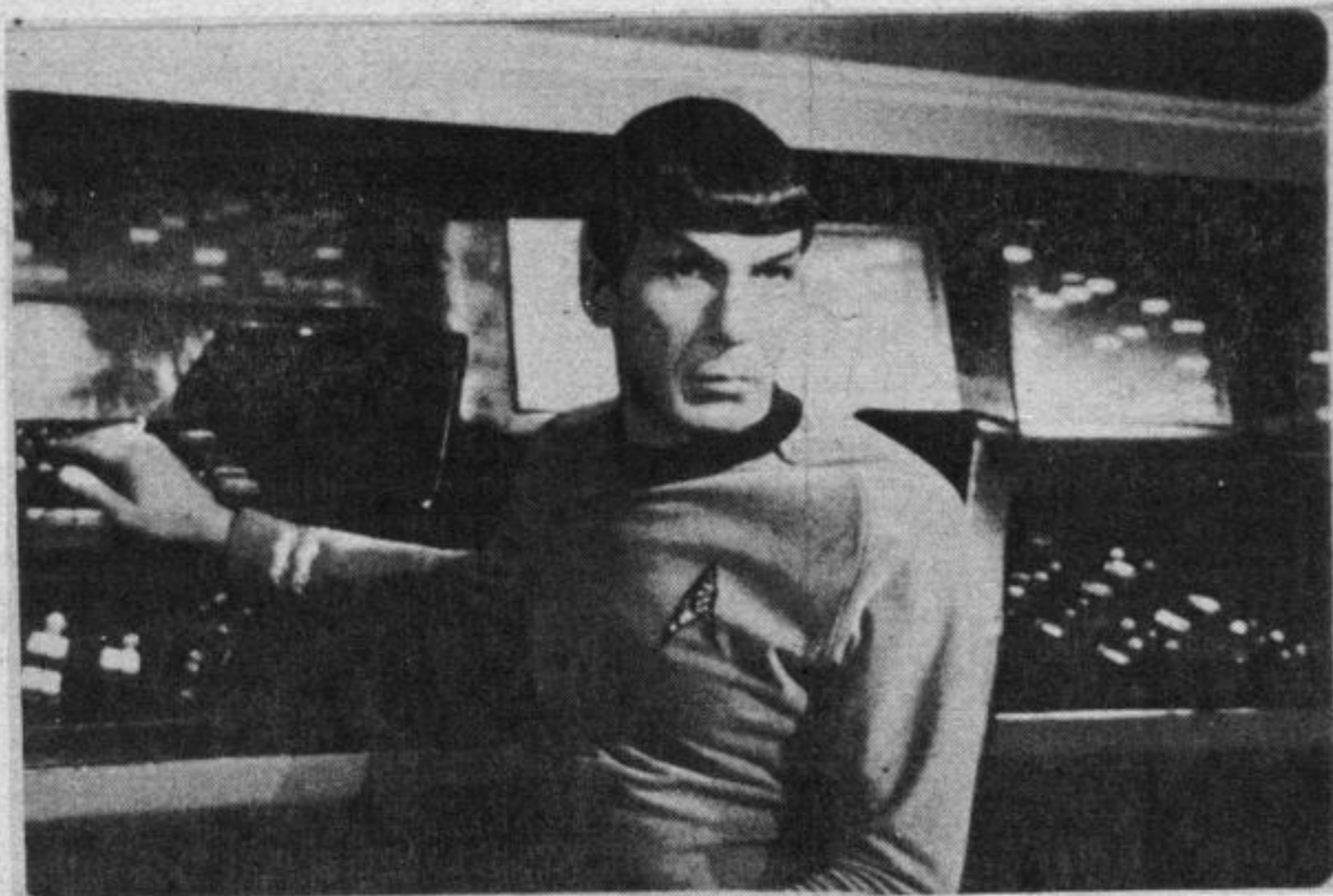
Of Spock's thirteen years on the Enterprise, only the last four have been under Captain James Kirk... though on the surface the two appear aloof, their relationship is actually a model of admiration, respect, and loyalty. Spock treats all crew members formally and never calls them by their first names. Even Kirk is generally addressed as "Captain" or "Sir." If there is anyone that the Vulcan does not get along with—again, at least on the surface—it is Dr. McCoy, whom Spock believes practices old-fashioned medicine and succeeds on pure luck. The pair sometimes engage in high-powered verbal fisticuffs, but nothing worse than that. McCoy is often non-plussed by Spock's unemotional nature and thinks of him as a use-

ful machine. Underneath it all, the doctor and the Chief Science Officer respect one another, but this goes unspoken.

Spock tries as best he can to occupy his leisure time. However, the fact remains that there are no other Vulcans on board and this makes life a little difficult. Still, he manages to amuse himself by engaging in research, working out mathematical problems, and playing three-dimensional chess. In a sense, Spock is resigned to being a loner.

So much for the Vulcan and his ups and downs. Now we turn to Leonard Nimoy and his story.

Acting has been a part of Leonard Nimoy's life ever since he was eight years old when he played Hansel in a production of "Hansel and Gretel" in his hometown of Boston. Ten years later, he moved to Los Angeles only to find himself drafted, a short time thereafter, and in Fort McPherson, Georgia as part of the U.S. Army. When he got out, Nimoy knew he wanted acting for a career, so he enrolled in the Pasadena Playhouse in California. To make ends meet, he worked at a variety of jobs—movie usher, cab driver, pet shop attendant, soda jerk, and delivery boy



among them. But Nimoy was not to be denied the stardom he so dearly sought, and soon found a career in television. He had roles in "Rawhide," "Outer Limits," "Profiles In Courage," "Dr. Kildare," "The Virginian," and the aforementioned "Lieutenant" series, prior to "Star Trek."

Nimoy is an articulate and outspoken individual—and here's some proof:

Nimoy on the appeal of Spock—"I don't quite understand it all, but I suspect that the character's remote quality—a sort of loneliness because he is different from the rest of the Earthling crew—makes the kids react. I think they see some of their own feelings in his loneliness and inability to be one of the group."

Nimoy on portraying Spock—"Spock is fun to portray because, underneath, he really does have emotions. If Spock didn't have any emotions, he wouldn't be interesting. Actually, Spock has a considerable amount of compassion, though he won't allow himself to believe that."

Nimoy on science fiction—"I started reading science fiction to get the feel of the concept and found that science fiction can be intelligent and entertaining. I also read current events about space flights, astronauts, flying saucers, and so forth. I must have looked at hundreds of pictures of these same things. As I became tuned in to these things in my daily life, they began to affect the character of Spock. He started to evolve, unconsciously."

Nimoy was also very outspoken about his

pointy ears—he hated them. They were made of rubber and fit very tightly around the actor's own ears. Thus, it didn't take too long before a terrific throbbing sensation began—somewhat akin to the pain a woman gets after wearing earrings that are too tight. An amusing incident occurred following the end of the show's first season involving Nimoy and then-Assistant Director Bob Justman. Knowing of the great discomfort caused by the rubber ears, Justman had a suggestion for the actor that would completely solve the problem for the following season. Leonard, of course, was quite anxious to hear Justman out. "We're going to send you to a plastic surgeon and we're going to point your ears," the assistant director claimed. "When the series is finished, we'll pay to have them put back to normal." Nimoy listened attentively and, though skeptical at first, began to think it might not be a bad idea. At that point, Justman could no longer keep a straight face and burst out laughing. When Leonard realized he was being put-on, he laughed louder than anyone.

Another incident that took place shortly before the show went on-the-air, concerned Nimoy's desire to demonstrate in front of television and newspaper critics the fact that "Star Trek" was not going to be just another science fiction show for children—such as "Lost In Space." These writers, who had been flown in from different parts of the country, simply assumed that it would be a gimmicky-type program for a four-year-old



mentality. But he and William Shatner took great pains to explain to them that the scripts were very sensitively written, violence was not the show's strong suit, and that, if anything, it would leave the audience with a thoughtful message. Still, the critics were not completely convinced. The following week, these same TV and newspaper writers were brought on to the set to watch some of the filming. As it turned out, the scene they got to see being filmed was one which, out of context, looked totally ridiculous—Spock, lying on a diagnostic table, oozing green blood, and saying, "Captain, the monster attacked me!" It's hard to believe that any of the critics ever took "Star Trek" seriously again—but they did . . . and for good reason.



SPOCK

PART TWO— AN ANALYSIS

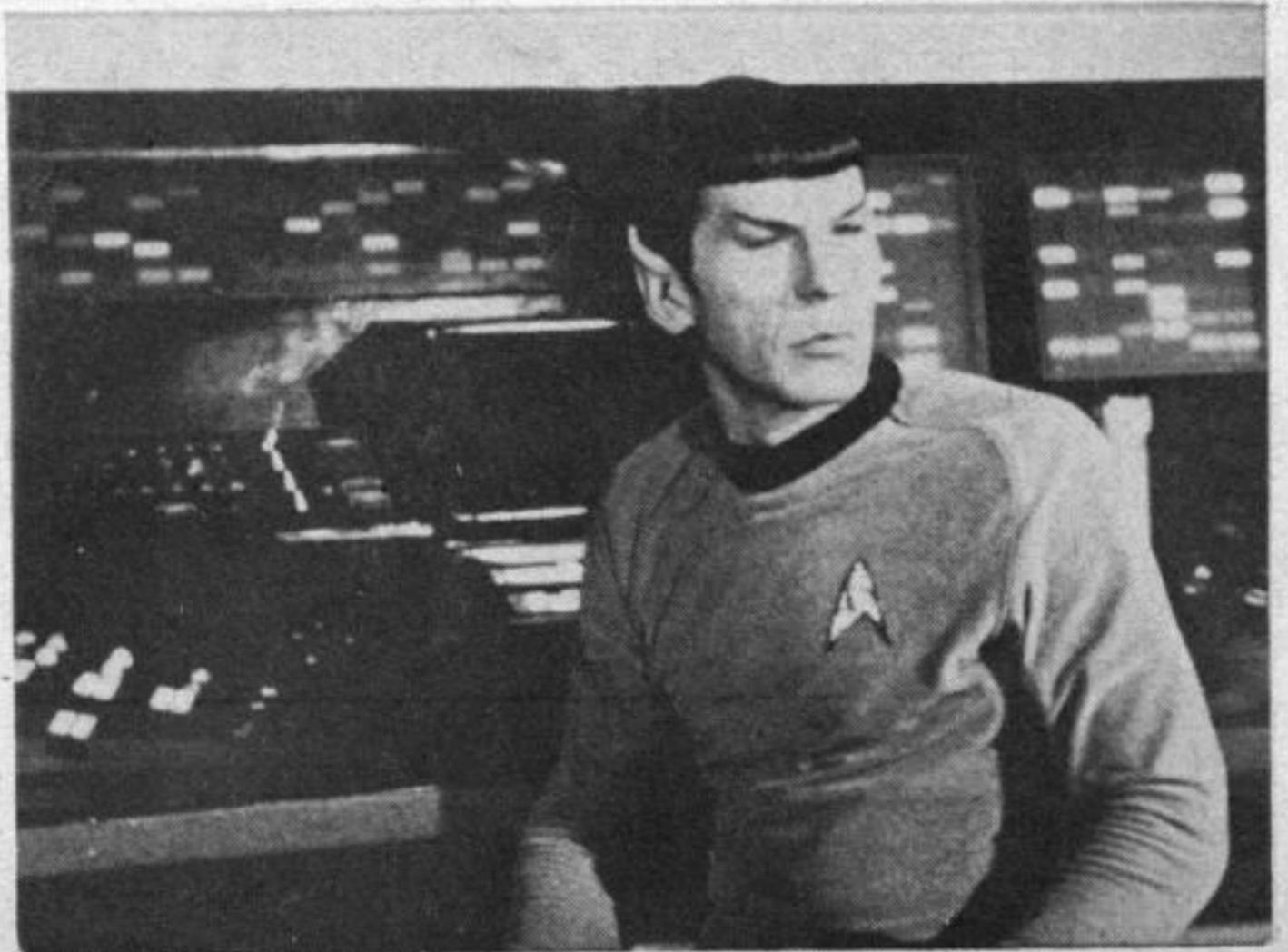
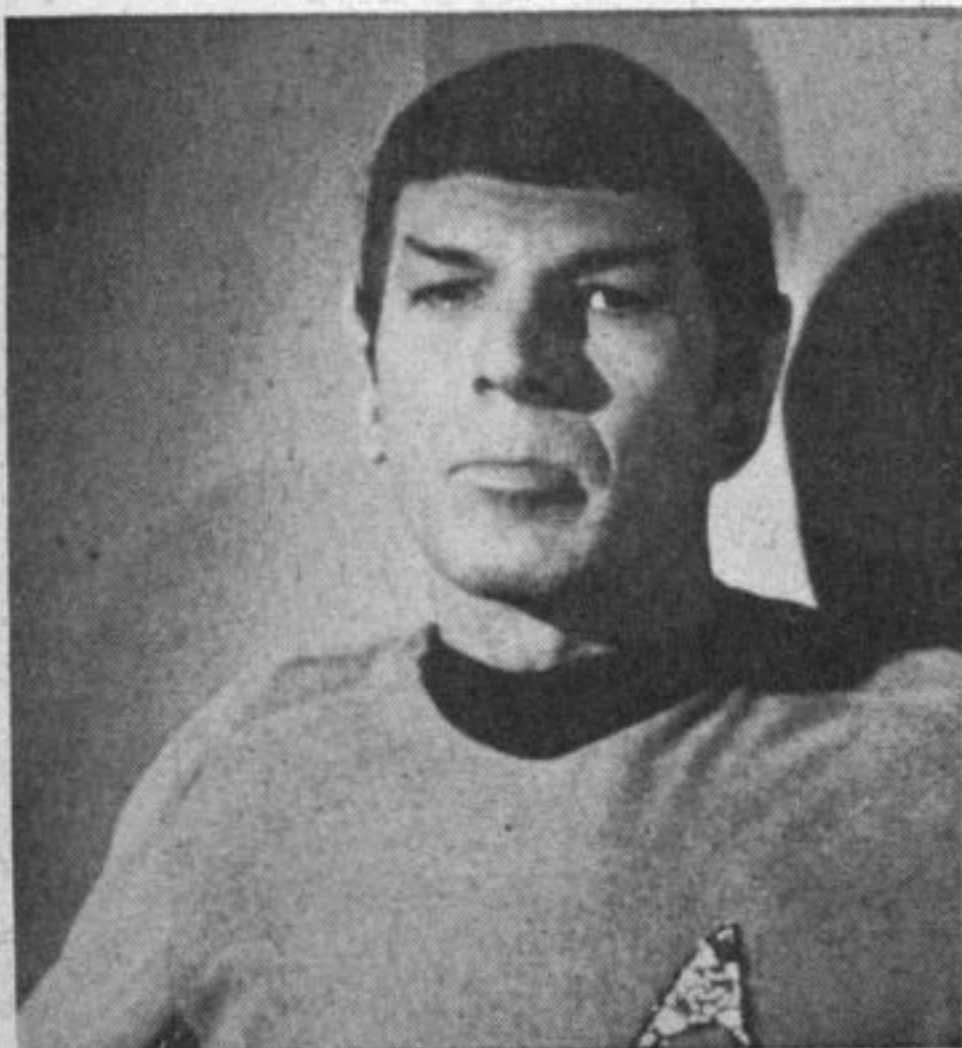


Interview by Ron Weiss

Jacqueline Lichtenberg is one of the co-authors, along with Sondra Marshak and Joan Winston, of the recent paperback best-seller "Star Trek Lives!" (Bantam, \$1.95). She has been involved in the "Star Trek" movement for years and has collected a library full of material on the subject. "Quasimodo" spoke to Ms. Lichtenberg recently about Mr. Spock and the incredible effect he has had on viewers over the years.

Quasimodo: You say that something called the "Spock charisma effect" accounts for his tremendous popularity. Would you explain this concept?

Lichtenberg: Each person who watches an episode of "Star Trek" sees a completely different show. This is not a particularly new discovery—if you have eleven eye-



witnesses to an accident, you're going to have at least ten different stories of what actually happened. The same effect occurs on people watching a television show or reading a book. In video drama, you cannot label a character as being "excited," for instance, as you can in the narrative form. The actor has to add this dimension of excitement and then the people watching have to interpret it. But when Spock does this, there's always that doubt because he is constantly playing down his emotions. They are always masked by this veil of non-emotion that he puts in front of us. Leonard Nimoy is quoted in the book as saying how "Star Trek" is always operating "on many levels." What Nimoy calls "many levels" is very similar to what we call the "tailored effect." Spock, himself, operates on many, many different levels, and each person can take Spock more or less as he wants to take him. He is not forced to take him in any particular way. Whereas, in a narrative format, a character is presented as he is presented, making it very hard to take him in a way that is radically different from what the author intended. So, on-the-air there is always this ambiguity—does he have emotions and repress them, or does he *not* have emotions and simulate them? What is it that we are actually seeing? How do we know that what we see when we look at Spock is actually emotion as we know it? We are seeing a reaction, but we cannot really say whether what he is feeling would be the same as what we would be feeling if

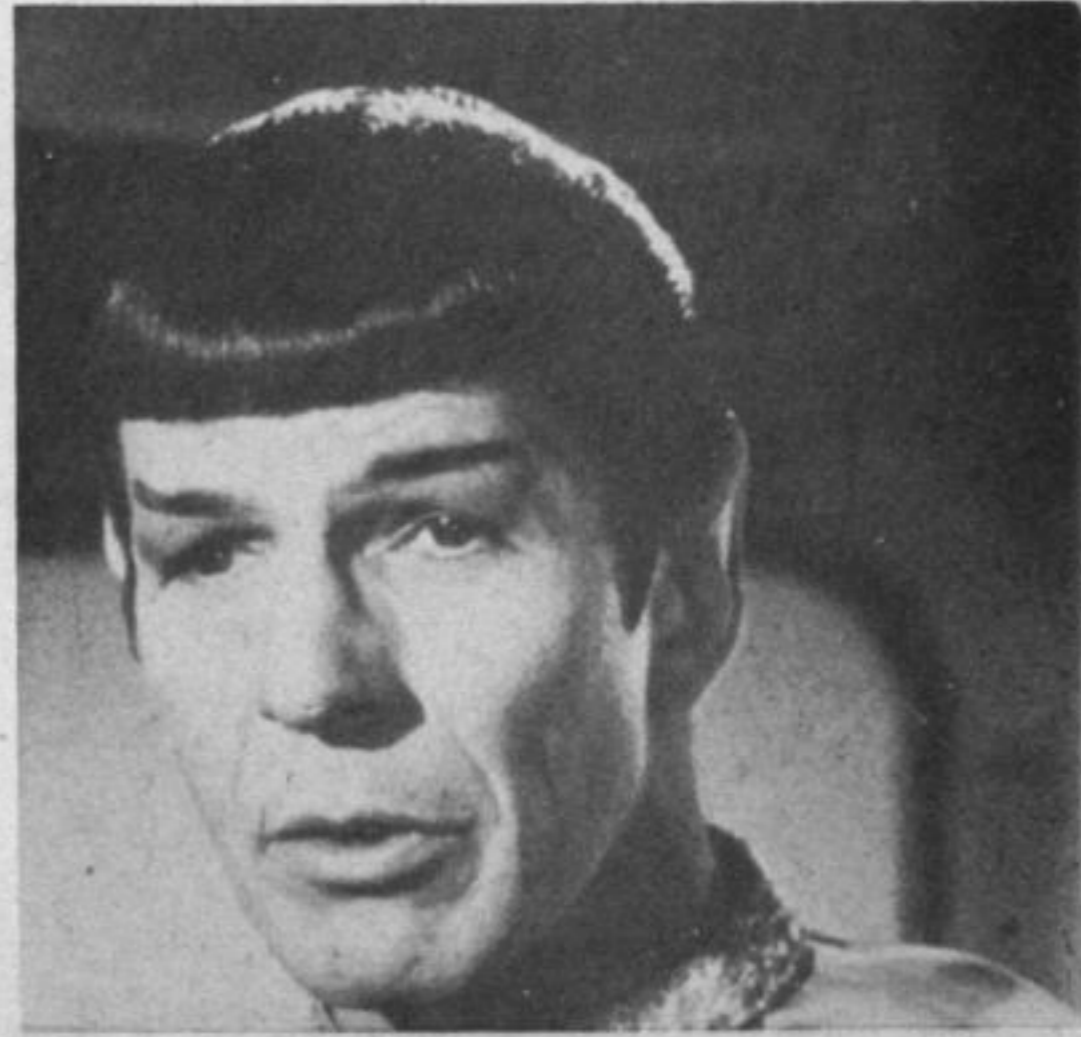
we displayed that reaction. This is a viewpoint which is widespread in fandom. Then there is the opposite viewpoint—since he is half-human, what we are seeing here has to be repressed human emotion. And this kind of argument rages because it intrigues people. They feel that they understand Spock and that they would be understood *by* Spock if they could meet him. They get very desperate about convincing all of their friends that what they see in Spock is really there. This desperation stems from the tremendous power and magnetism of the "Spock charisma effect," which is an interweaving of at least seven different aspects of the Spock character—sexuality not being the least of these.

Quasi: Yet, a lot of people are not attracted to him because of his unemotionality.

Lichtenberg: You know the term "cold intellect?" Well, a lot of people are turned off by Spock, believe it or not, in spite of the fact that he is probably *the* most popular character in "Star Trek." There is a good portion of "Star Trek" fandom which is very, very anti-Spock because they see him as very cold. But there are people who see beneath that cold surface. Spock has a magnificent mind and many see his intellect as an incredibly sexy thing.

Quasi: What attracts *you* to Spock?

Lichtenberg: For me, personally, it is his alien-ness, his non-humanity which attracts me. It is an inducement to think outside of the circumscribed habitual pat-



terns of thought of the human race and to think in galactic terms. If you've ever lived outside the American culture, it is only then that you begin to realize how homogeneous the American culture is. Everywhere you go in the United States is almost the same as anywhere else, and how very different the rest of the world lives and thinks and reacts. If you can see this just travelling from one country to another, consider what it would be like to go to another planet and get an outsider's perspective.



This is one of the reasons why Gene Roddenberry wanted the alien character and fought for Spock so hard. He said, "All right, I'll change him from red to green—anything to make you happy. But he's got to have pointed ears. It's got to be obvious that he's an alien." Why? So that he could look at us from the outside and show us to ourselves as we really are. That's where the appeal is to me. One person can sit and watch "Star Trek" and respond to Spock on one level. He is responding to one of the "tailored effects" that the character emits. He sees only that one color, that one aspect of him. With the "tailored effect," the person who is watching the show sees only that one specific color which is *tailored* to his own fantasy structure within his own mind—and hit it hard! And that is what causes these people to become drawn into this thing and to begin to build their own fantasies around and within "Star Trek."

Quasi: Leonard Nimoy doesn't seem to take too seriously the thought of Spock

being treated as a "sex symbol." How do you feel about this?

Lichtenberg: He's an actor—an artist. He's not afraid of the idea that Spock is a sex symbol but he's not particularly enamored with it. He doesn't consider it Spock's only attribute or even an especially important attribute. Nimoy just doesn't dwell on this aspect of Spock very much. Someone will come up to him and say, "Gee, Spock is such a magnificently sexy person." And he would say, "Oh, yeah? That's nice!" He recognizes, almost instinctively, that that person is seeing the "sex tailored effect" but nothing else.

Spock is somebody who says to you, personally, "I will understand how you feel if you tell me." It's not, "I will understand how you feel if you tell me you have a drinking problem," or "I will understand why you're on drugs." It's not anything specific, but "I will understand how you feel if you tell me, *no matter what it is!*" This is something a little bit different from the everyman concept. It is a human capacity for communication on a totally nonverbal level because there is no way you can tell another person in words how you feel.

Quasi: How would you characterize the relationship between Spock and Captain Kirk?

Lichtenberg: We said that in one word in our book—love, which doesn't mean sex, necessarily. But it is everything that has ever been meant by love. There are a couple of episodes, a couple of very brief scenes, in which Spock establishes a "mind meld" with Kirk, and I think that this is very, very important to the Spock/Kirk relationship. People know that no matter how alien Spock is, he understands how Kirk feels on this very deep, nonverbal level. Kirk is a part of Spock because between the two they make up a whole individual, with Dr. McCoy in between as a sense of humor and conscience. Except for occasional aliens, Spock has had "mind melds" with Christine Chapel, Scotty, Kirk, and McCoy—no one else. These are the only people he has touched mentally. The group of them form almost a single entity. In essence, Gene Roddenberry specifically formed the Spock/Kirk polarity as *two sides of himself!* He did it on purpose—something that is really mind-blowing.