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INTERVIEW: JONATHAN FRAKES ON UPCOMING 'OFFICIAL STAR TREK CONVENTION' APPEARANCES AND MORE

 Posted by: Sherry Lipp December 8, 2014 in [Culture and Society](#), [Culture Interviews](#)

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Jonathan Frakes is probably best known as Commander William T. Riker from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The actor appeared on all seven seasons of the show and made appearances on the other three spin-off series. The director of two *Trek* feature films, *First Contact* and *Insurrection*, Frakes has been keeping busy both with his *Trek* legacy and behind the camera on shows like *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Falling Skies*, and *Burn Notice*.



Image: Creation Entertainment

The weekend of December 12, 2014, Frakes is appearing at [Creation Entertainment's Official Star Trek Convention](#) in Seattle and San Francisco. Frakes took some time to talk with me [^] at the conventions, his thoughts on *Star Trek*, and his upcoming projects.

Tell me a little bit about the Star Trek next generation reunion? You're doing Seattle and San Francisco in the same weekend?

Yeah, it should be fun. We're all together on a panel and it's generally emceed by a hard-core Trekker or sometimes local DJ or celebrity. It's an open forum with our cast together, mostly us taking the piss out of each other and sharing secrets. The reunion event is really fun. Denise [Crosby] is with us this time, and Marina [Sirtis] and Brent [Spiner]. We know each other too well, it's quite evident when we're all together. That, I think, makes it fun for the fans. Compared to the regular panels, which are usually just one or two of us, this is more of an open forum. It's really fun.

What kinds of questions do you get from fans, anything unusual?

I usually get asked things about the ship, or the show, that I have no idea. Like, why does the ship only go warp 9.9, where the bathrooms, why don't the costumes have pockets, where you get a cup coffee, or where in the galaxy does a certain alien come from?

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Why do you think *Star Trek* has endured over all these years?

It's Gene Roddenberry's vision of hope, especially now, in a time when we are so miserably treating each other with disrespect. It's a very healthy way to look forward. Right now, it doesn't appear as if we're listening to the Prime Directive.

What was it like working with Gene Roddenberry?

He played a significant role in me getting the job. I had to audition seven times over six weeks. For the last three or four auditions I went to his office before we went to whatever executive needed to be convinced, and he would instill in me this idea that in the 24th century there will be no hunger, and there will be no greed, and all of the children will know how to lead. He believed that, he totally believed it. He was a funny and inspired man who I was very glad to have had a chance to work with.

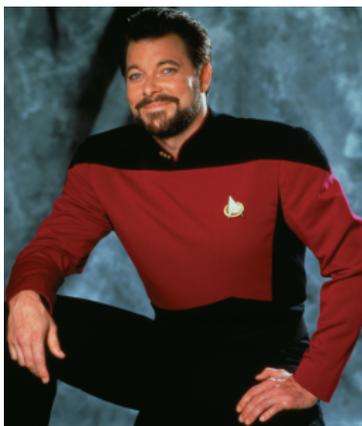


Image: CBS/Paramount

Do you find yourself getting asked to do a lot of science fiction projects, outside of *Star Trek*?

I have for the last 28 years. I've just recently begun to direct other types of shows. I'm thrilled to be doing a wider range of shows like character driven comedies, black comedy, dramadies, and dance shows. However, I never bite the hand that feeds.

What is your favorite project you've done outside of *Star Trek*?

That's a good question. I just finished a great show actually, which has not aired yet. It's called *Hindsight*, which is a scripted drama on VH-1. It's like a combination of *Girls* meets *Friends* meets *Parenthood*. It was wonderful writing and acting. I had a blast on the show. Michael Trim, from *Orange is the New Black*, did the pilot and then I did the next two episodes. The show is just finding itself and it's always fun to be around a new show like that. Keep your eyes peeled for that one.

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What other current projects are you working on?

I just finished editing an episode of *Falling Skies*, which is in its last season. I start next week on *Switched at Birth*. I'd also like to promote *The Librarians*, which is a brand new show on TNT that I'm working on. It's based on the 2007 TV movies I used to do with Noah Wylie. We're hoping it's going to be a huge success and we get picked up so we can do about seven seasons of *The Librarians*. So I'm doing all that and a dance show, it's basically a soap opera with dancers. It's called *Hit the Floor*. It'll be on early 2015.

How does directing episodic television compare with directing feature films?

With movies you get to finish it and hope they like it and hope it does well. You live with it, it's like your child. With episodic TV you live with it for like a month and if it's great everyone is thrilled and if it's not great you move on to the next one. With television you have to deliver your show, but you don't have the final cut or the final sound and visual effects. The producers take over and either re-cut it, or they like what you've done and move on.

What about directing video games? You directed *Star Trek: Klingon* back in 1996. What was that like?

That was new territory. It was a brand new experience for everybody. Casting all those Klingons and creating all the different endings. It was a real "learning by the seat of your pants" experience.

What do you think of the new movies?



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I think J.J. Abrams is a brilliant storyteller. I love both movies, the first one in particular. I think Karl Urban has absolutely channeled DeForest Kelley's Bones and Benedict Cumberbatch was brilliant in the last one. The visual effects are spectacular. I think it's in really good hands.

Will we see *Star Trek* back on television?

I had an idea for a *Star Trek* series that I was going to take to CBS/Paramount where we did our show. They said, "Don't bother to come in. We already turned down Brian Singer and William Shatner." That gives a pretty good idea that they're not interested in doing another TV show anytime soon.

How do you think *The Next Generation* would be different if it were on TV now?

I think if we were doing the show now we would do five or six episode arcs. Continuing storylines were not a thing back then, like now. We did do a couple during the Borg cliffhanger. It's much more a current storytelling technique that I think would have worked very well on our show.



Image: CBS/Paramount

Have you considered writing a memoir?

I'm too busy working. I think that comes when you've stopped and I have no intention of stopping any time soon.

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Thanks to Jonathan Frakes for his time. For more information about his convention appearances please visit the official [Creation Entertainment website](#).

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