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BIRD-OF-PREY**  
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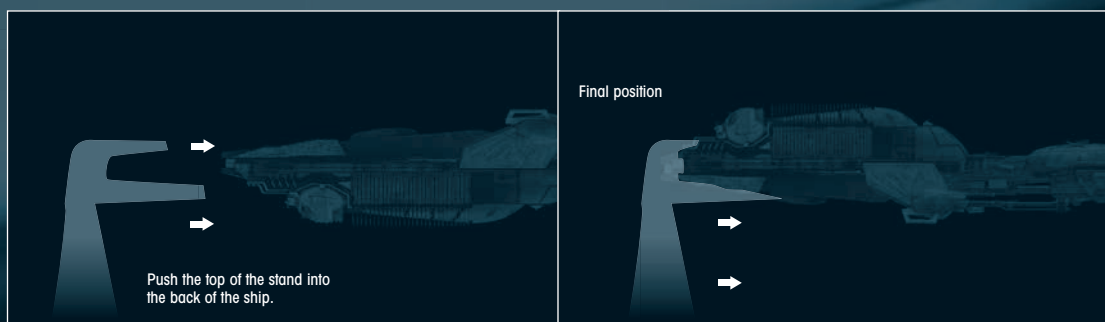
# KLINGON BIRD-OF-PREY

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# KLINGON BIRD-OF-PREY

## SPECIFICATION



OPERATED BY: KLINGON DEFENSE FORCE

CLASS: *B' REL*

IN OPERATION: 2285-2375

LENGTH: 139 METERS

DECKS: 6

MAX SPEED: WARP 9.6

WEAPONRY: 2 PHASE DISRUPTOR CANNONS

1 PHOTON TORPEDO LAUNCHER





*KLINGON*  
**BIRD-OF-PREY**

Armed with disruptors, photon torpedos and capable of cloaking, the Klingon bird-of-prey was a formidable warship.









MATTERS OF

# LIFE AND DEATH

In 2002, *STAR TREK III* writer/producer Harve Bennett looked back on resurrecting Spock, killing Kirk's son, and destroying the *U.S.S. Enterprise*

Back in 1982, movie franchises were few and far between. It was something of a surprise that there had been a *STAR TREK II*, and few people expected to see a *STAR TREK III*. "Sequels were considered poison," recalls Harve Bennett, who was a driving force behind both films, "but *STAR TREK II* was a sequel that took more on its opening weekend than the original movie!"

And so, just days after *STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN* opened, Paramount's then president, Michael Eisner, called Bennett and told him to start work as the writer/producer of *STAR TREK III*.

Bennett was soon joined in his work by Spock actor Leonard Nimoy, who signed on to direct the new movie. The two men began to discuss the demands of the story, starting with the fact that Spock had died at the end of *STAR TREK II*.

Fortunately, Bennett had persuaded that film's director, Nicholas Meyer, that Spock's demise shouldn't be presented as an absolute. In Meyer's first cut, there was no hope that Spock might be resurrected, and the film ended on a downer.

"For the first preview audience, we played it as Nick had cut it," Bennett says. "The audience

▲ Harve Bennett holds court prior to filming a bluescreen shot of the Klingon bird-of-prey for *STAR TREK III*.



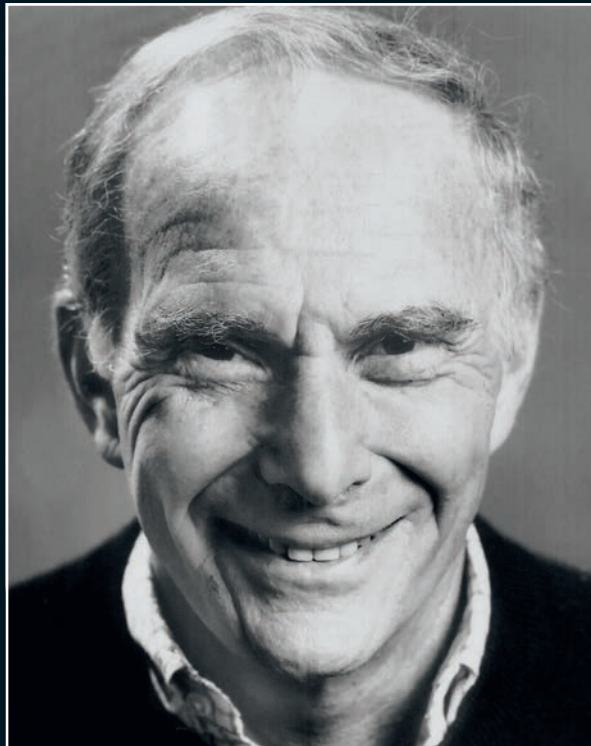
cried and cried, and there was silence at the end. I remember thinking, 'Jeez, we can't do this!' I didn't have any thoughts about a sequel at that point. My concern was purely about the success of the picture. Nick originally said, 'That's the picture we set out to make isn't it? We set out to kill Spock.' I said, 'Yes, but we didn't set out to kill *STAR TREK*! Why don't we just imply, in Spock's words, that there are... possibilities.'"

#### A CHANCE OF LIFE

And so, at Bennett's suggestion, Meyer created a new ending, in which Spock's coffin lands on the newly created Genesis Planet, where all kinds of creative forces are at work. The film also ended with Nimoy's voiceover intoning, 'Space: the final frontier' – a speech previously reserved for Kirk.

"In the next preview, the audience cried, but they also stood up and applauded. And that, to me, was the difference between it being the end of something and the beginning of something. It was when we saw the people cheering that night that we first thought that maybe we'd go on to do another picture."

Spock's death also meant that Bennett and Nimoy knew exactly what the next movie should be about. "You had a given," he says. "You were going to find Spock. And with the Genesis Device you also had the 23rd-century equivalent of the H-bomb. If Kirk had to rescue Spock against the



◀ Harve Bennett in the early 2000s. He died on February 25, 2015, just two days before his long-time friend and colleague Leonard Nimoy.

odds, then the decision that the Genesis Planet would now be politically off limits helped us to establish those odds."

By September 1982, Bennett had produced a story outline. In this early take, it is the Romulans who are interested in the Genesis Planet, having established that it is rich in valuable dilithium. A Romulan task force beams down to the surface, where it discovers Spock's empty coffin.



◀ The photon torpedo capsule that served as Spock's coffin at the end of *STAR TREK II* provided Bennett with a clear start point for its follow-up.

Meanwhile, the *Enterprise* heads for Earth, having returned David and Carol Marcus to their scientific researches. Various members of the crew have seen Spock's 'ghost', and McCoy is deeply troubled. Disobeying orders, Kirk takes the ship to Vulcan. Here, they discover that some Vulcans have reverted to primitive ways. Prime minister Sarek explains that these Vulcans object to the Federation having so powerful a weapon as the Genesis Device, and so are in revolt. Sarek also admonishes Kirk for not bringing his son's body home to Vulcan, asking him how he knew that Spock wasn't in a transcendental state.

### RETURNING TO GENESIS

Leaving McCoy on Vulcan, Kirk returns to face the wrath of Starfleet Command on Earth. As well as unleashing Genesis, he disobeyed orders by going to Vulcan. When he justifies his actions by talking about Spock's ghost, he is confined to quarters. Sulu breaks Kirk out of confinement, and the rest of the *Enterprise* command crew helps him steal the ship and head to Genesis – evading the *U.S.S. Excelsior*, which Scotty has sabotaged. En route,

they are joined by McCoy, who has traveled from Vulcan on a transport ship.

On Genesis, the Romulans have begun dillithium mining, but something is killing them one by one. In orbit, their second-in-command, a female sub-commander, ambushes the *Enterprise*. Already badly damaged, the ship cannot fight back, so the crew initiates self-destruct before beaming down to Genesis and abandoning the much-loved vessel to an ill-fated boarding party.

On the planet's surface, Saavik confesses her love for Kirk, and the next morning the crew are captured by the Romulans. Kirk now realizes what is at stake – with access to this much dillithium, the Romulans would become unstoppable.

The crew is rescued by a mysterious figure who turns out to be a regenerated, but "ragged and half mad" Spock. McCoy succeeds in subduing him as the planet begins to tear itself apart. In the midst of this chaos, Kirk tricks the orbiting Romulan sub-commander into beaming him and his crew on board. They take control of the Romulan ship and offer to rescue the Romulan leader from the planet below, but he chooses to die with Genesis.

► Early concept art for the Romulan commander and his alien pet. The character eventually morphed into the Klingon commander, Kruge, still with a beloved 'dog' at his side.





Kirk then heads for Earth and surrenders to the *Excelsior*. The movie ends in sickbay, with Spock thanking Kirk for coming back for him.

#### KLINGONS VS. ROMULANS

"If you look at that outline, the picture is there," Bennett says. "But there are too many complexities and side issues, things that delay the drama. I just threw everything in, including the kitchen sink!"

He adds that the outline also reveals the deficiencies in his understanding of *STAR TREK* at the time. With Nimoy, he began to re-examine the story, with the series veteran pointing out where it wasn't consistent with the TV show, and helping to eliminate the unnecessary elements. "Our first conversations were about the Romulans versus the Klingons. I was just looking for a heavy, and in the series the Romulans seemed – to me – more dastardly than the Klingons.

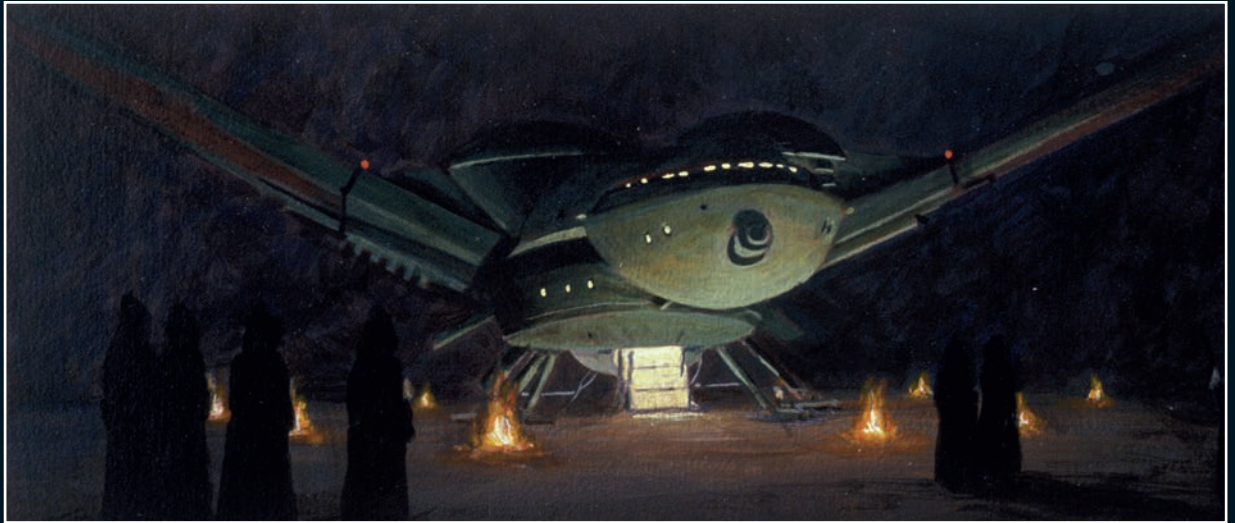
"At Leonard's suggestion, we changed it to the Klingons and dug into their motivation. That gave us the perfect foil: people who would use this device for evil. Leonard's knowledge of how we could do it made the Klingons the perfect fit."



Though the Romulans were gone, their signature ship from *THE ORIGINAL SERIES* remained. Bennett says this was because the name – bird-of-prey – was so evocative and lent itself to an impressive new design, even if it was not consistent with *STAR TREK* history. "I always bowed to Leonard on these things," he explains. "He was, after all, the senior Vulcanologist of the franchise, in addition to being the director. After due consideration, Leonard said, 'The hell with it!' and we agreed that the Klingons would steal the best from anybody, even though we didn't have time to show it in the story."

▲ Top: concept art of the "half mad" Spock killing a pair of Romulans on the Genesis Planet (note the huge skeleton, suggesting that animals have lived and died as part of the planet's rapid evolution. Above: Concept art of the *Enterprise* burning over the Genesis Planet.

► Concept art of the bird-of-prey landing on Vulcan in *STAR TREK III*.



▼ An ornately patterned ORIGINAL SERIES style Romulan bird-of-prey.



◀ Industrial Light & Magic's Bill George works on the electrics of the finished studio model, which he built based on conceptual images by ILM's Nilo Rodis-Jamero.

▲ Top: An underside view of the study model for the bird-of-prey, with wing details inspired by the original Romulan vessel. Above: The ship lands on Vulcan in the completed film.

Other changes to the story involved clarifying its main thrust. Nimoy suggested they watch 'Amok Time', the *ORIGINAL SERIES* episode where Spock returns to Vulcan during his seven-yearly pon-farr to mate with his arranged bride. Bennett says this was a valuable exercise. "All the Vulcan seeds of *STAR TREK III* were in that episode. Leonard shared his knowledge with me, including the idea that, at the age of seven, Spock had a finger-touching introduction to his intended bride. So all this stuff began to be very rich. The fact that Spock would change every seven years also led us to the idea that the planet would be evolving with him."

### TAMPERING WITH NATURE

Around this time, another major plot piece fell into place. *STAR TREK* creator Gene Roddenberry suggested the Genesis Planet could be tearing itself apart because the Genesis Device used protomatter, which was inherently unstable – and illegal. This allowed Bennett to deal with two things that had troubled him.

"Thematically, I was worried about what we had done with the Genesis Device," he says. "How do you do any future stories when there is a Genesis Device lurking over your head? That power could solve most of the problems in the universe! More importantly, I felt like we had done something that only nature and/or God could do. But protomatter made it an act of human frailty and imperfection. Like his father (in *STAR TREK II*'s *Kobayashi Maru* test), David had cheated. And so a door needed



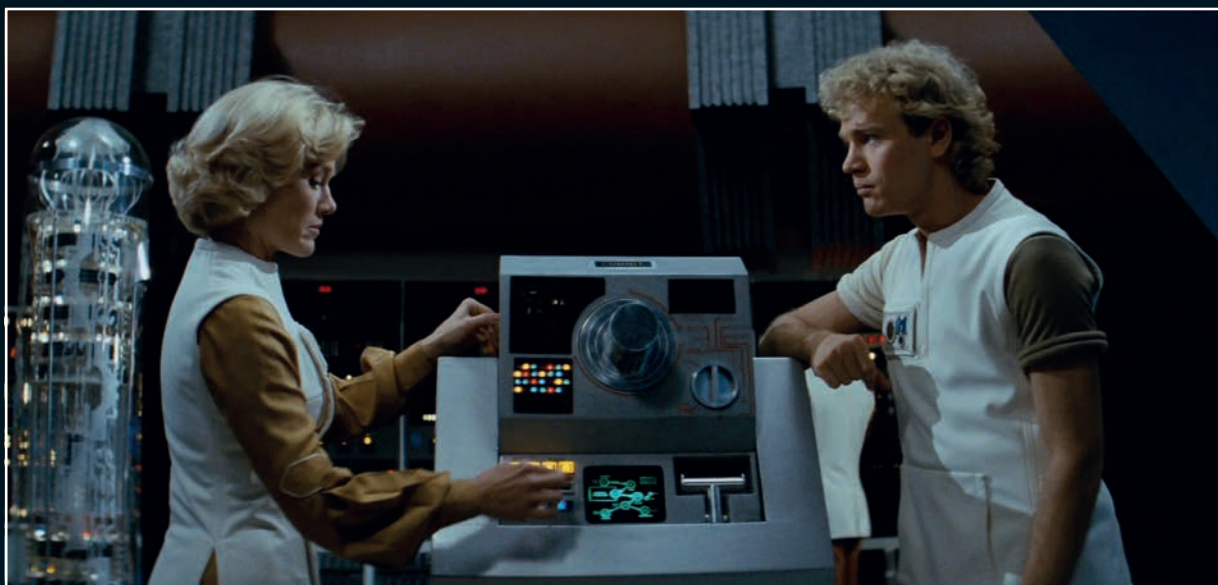
◀ 'Amok Time' gave fans their first glimpse of the planet Vulcan and its mating rituals in *THE ORIGINAL SERIES*.

to be closed. The idea that you don't mess with Mother Nature gave us the timetable of the planet's evolution, a reason why Spock was growing older, and a reason why – ultimately – the planet had to self-destruct."

This realization also provided the movie with an important karmic balance. Having cheated, Bennett reasoned, David Marcus had to pay with his life. And, while Kirk would rescue Spock from death, the cost to him would be the loss of his ship and his son. And so David was introduced to the story, though the role of Carol Marcus was still surplus to requirements.

"I knew we couldn't use Carol," says Bennett, "because now we were focusing on something that her son had done without her knowledge. Otherwise, we would have had a mother and son in collusion to trick the Federation with false science, which wouldn't have been right."

By now, the significant elements of the story were all in place, and Bennett had simplified



◀ Carol and David Marcus together with the Genesis Device in *STAR TREK II*.



◀ David's cheating broke the laws of nature, and he pays for it with his life...



◀ ...Kirk's mission to rescue Spock is a way of cheating death, and he pays for it with his ship...



◀ ...while Kruge cheats himself by not taking Kirk's hand, and he pays by losing his life!

the plot by eliminating the early trip to Vulcan and Spock's ghost. But a simple fact remained: as it was obvious to everyone that the movie would end with Spock's resurrection, Bennett had to make sure that the journey to get to that point was as interesting as possible.

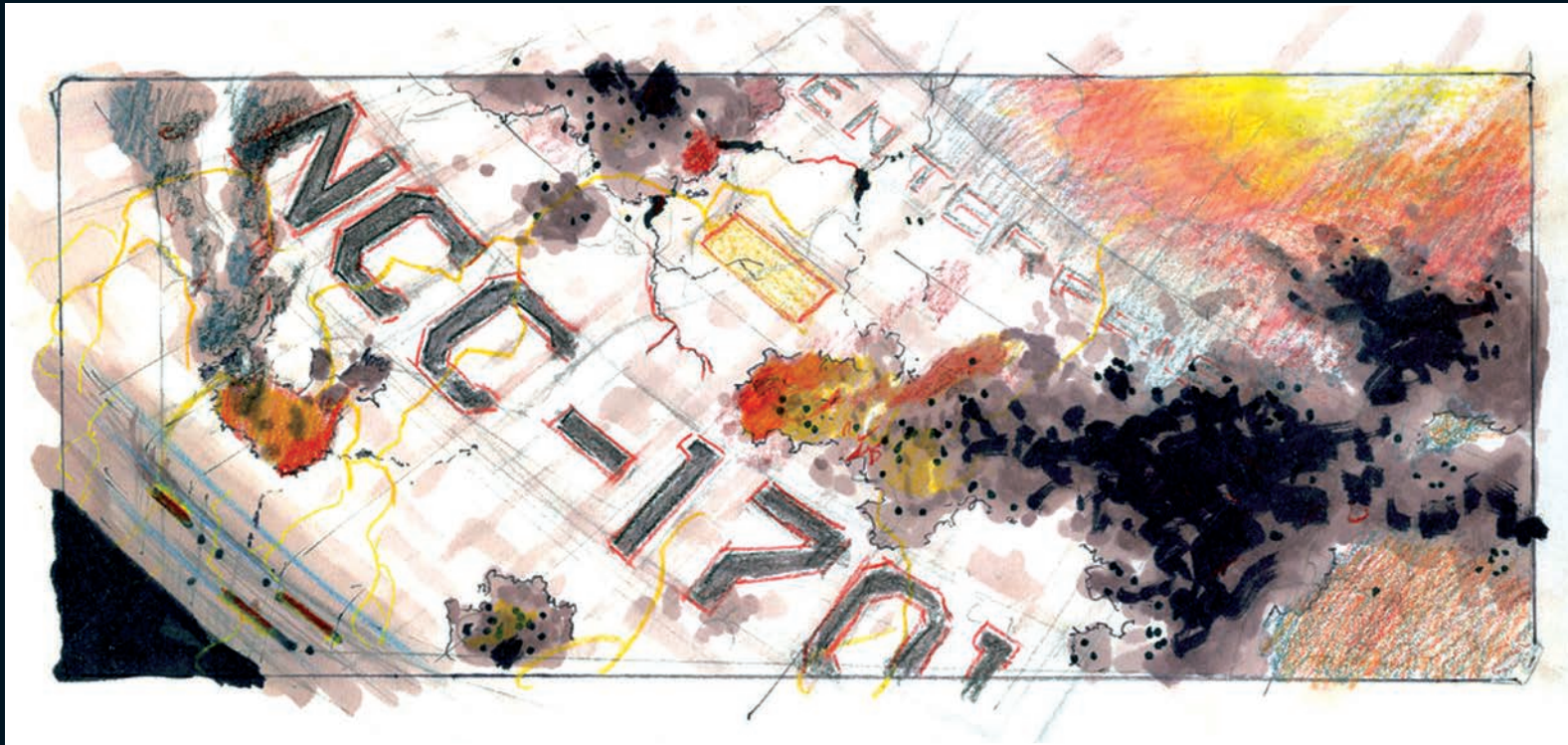
"When I was a film student at UCLA," Bennett reminisces, "I came to the conclusion that there are only two elements that you are working with in storytelling. One is suspense and the other is surprise. There are times you tell the audience something to create suspense, and times you don't tell them something to create surprise. That's oversimplified, but it's a handy rule.

"The audience knows that Spock will emerge alive. So the trick then is to say, 'OK, here's a little nibble for you: there's a lifeform on the Genesis Planet! Then, just as you're getting interested in that, the Klingons emerge to screw everything up. That is surprise, which, in turn, creates suspense, because now we can't get to Spock. That carries on throughout the picture, with the revelation that the planet is disintegrating and the destruction of the *Enterprise*. All of those things were intended to create either surprise or suspense."

### EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Another device Bennett used to create surprise was to set up conventional situations, where the audience knew what to expect, and then doing the opposite of those expectations. So David is killed rather than spared at the last minute; Kirk actually destroys the *Enterprise* after bluffing that he would do so in the past; and Kruge refuses to take Kirk's hand in order to save himself.

"No one is more conscious of clichés than the people who have made them," Bennett smiles. "Avoiding them becomes almost a religion. You're making decisions about when to do the expected, and when not to." After 20 years of working in TV, Bennett was especially excited by the possibilities of the unexpected. "One of the major frustrations of writing for television is that you can't mess with characters," he explains. "You can't kill your stars, because they have to be there next week. After all those years of being constrained by the rules of television, I was like a kid in a candy store. I was excited by the freedom to even think about killing Spock or blowing up the *Enterprise*."



He also admits that he was influenced by what he had observed in the preview screenings for *STAR TREK II*. "I got drunk on having an audience. Sitting in the theater watching *STAR TREK II* and hearing the validation for the storyteller – listening to the breathing and the laughs, seeing things work – that's incredible for someone who's spent most of his career sending his work out over the airwaves and never seeing how it is received."

#### EMOTIONAL IMPACT

The destruction of the *Enterprise* in *STAR TREK III* was designed to have the same emotional impact as Spock's death in the previous film. Bennett recalls that the scene outraged some fans and disturbed *STAR TREK*'s originator. "I remember Roddenberry objected to the idea," he says. "He suggested we just blow up the dish, because it was replaceable. I said to Leonard, 'Well, if the dish is replaceable, why isn't the whole ship replaceable?' He said, 'It is, but you've got to give him time.'"

The character of David Marcus, however, could not be replaced. Bennett acknowledges that his death was a high price for Kirk to pay in order to bring Spock back from the dead. But he was also aware that the audience was more emotionally attached to the ship than to this relatively new character. And, he says, the same was true of Kirk.



▲ Top and above:  
Two pieces of concept art envisioning the end of the *Enterprise* in *STAR TREK III*.

"For me, the way Bill (Shatner) played the last scene with David in *STAR TREK II*, there was no real embrace. It felt like 'OK, I have a son, that's good, but now I have other things to do.'

"Part of that was Merritt (Butrick, playing David). He was a frail-looking scientist, not exactly Kirk's kind of kid. I felt like they would never become really close. In my mind, he was not so much losing a treasured son, as losing a just-found object with whom he really had no long-term relationship."

Bennett also says that Kirk's losses played to themes that complemented the previous movie.



"In *STAR TREK II*, Nick had written about the needs of the many outweighing the needs of the few, whereas *STAR TREK III* was about the needs of the few. Just as we reversed Genesis, we reversed the importance of the individual and the collective. If there was a theme that was it. Leonard expressed it in his own way: it was about friendship; it was about selflessness."

#### SAAVIK AND SEXUALITY

Another significant change compared to *STAR TREK II* was brought about by external factors. Though the producers wanted Kirstie Alley to return as the young Vulcan Saavik, the studio had not negotiated a sequel clause as part of her original contract. Negotiations to bring her back ultimately fell through, leaving Bennett with a problem. "There were several things we thought about," he says. "One was that Saavik didn't have to appear at all. But we needed someone in the crew with Vulcan knowledge. Also, we'd hit on Spock's accelerated lifespan, and his accelerated sexuality. In 'Amok Time' there is a lot of danger involved in pon farr. We took that almost literally, and that's very much in the picture. Leonard and I agreed we needed Saavik to deal with Spock's sexuality. We knew



it had to be simple and restrained, and I thought it was magnificent when I saw it in the dailies."

Of all the changes to the film, however, Bennett says that the most significant ones came out of a conference with William Shatner. "Bill called a meeting," he reveals. "He just said, 'I can't do this, I can't do this.' We said, 'Well, let's talk about it. Tell us what you don't like, from page one.' What he was concerned about was that Kirk was not at the center of the action; that he was reduced to a passive role because so many other elements in this story were triggering decisive action.

"That meeting, probably more than any other single factor, determined the final shape of the script. Bill had numerous good points, but there

▲ Top left: Kirstie Alley as Saavik in *STAR TREK II*, for which the character was conceived as half Vulcan and half Romulan. Above: Robin Curtis as the more fully Vulcan Saavik seen in *STAR TREK III*.





◀ Changes requested by William Shatner made sure Kirk was central to the action throughout *STAR TREK III...*

▼ ...But Bennett still vetoed Kirk's inclusion in a touching scene with Spock and Dr. McCoy.





▲ Bennett started writing the film at the end, with Kirk elated by the return of his dear friend Spock.

were several that we stood firm on. For example, he said, 'You know that beautiful scene with Bones and Spock (on the bird-of-prey while en route for Vulcan)? I should be in that scene.' Leonard and I said, 'No you shouldn't. The poignancy of this scene is that Spock has given his katra to Bones, who was his comedic adversary throughout the TV series. They were always fighting, and it was always a question of passion versus logic. So here is a wonderful opportunity for Bones to tell Spock how he really feels about him. That's the beauty of the scene.' Bill said, 'Hmm, OK. Let's go on to the next one!' That's the kind of meeting it was.

"I cannot tell you exactly what we changed. I do know that things like, 'You Klingon bastard,

you killed my son,' came out of that meeting. By focusing on Bill's notes, and centering Kirk as the dynamic that drove the script, we did ourselves a great service. Everybody was happy, and the script was the better for it."

#### ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS

With Shatner's notes in place, the final dynamic of the story was clear. Kirk, aided by his crew, would risk everything to rescue Spock. Along the way, he would lose much as cosmic scores were settled, but at the end of the movie he would be on Vulcan looking into his old friend's face and smiling.

"I remember vividly that I wrote that last scene first," says Bennett. "It came out of my mind in a



◀ Lightening the mood in part three of a trilogy: *STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME*.



◀ Bennett and Shatner deep in conversation on the Vulcan set during the making of *STAR TREK III*.

few blurred minutes, as if I had written it before. Later, I realized that, like all writers, I had borrowed from the best – in this case William Gibson. The last scene in *STAR TREK III* is the last scene of Gibson's masterpiece, *The Miracle Worker*. It's when, with wonder and puzzlement, Helen Keller – deaf, mute, and blind – says: 'Wa - ter,' and her teacher and friend Annie Sullivan confirms, 'Yes!' That's our scene. Spock says, 'Your name... is Jim,' And Kirk says, 'Yes, Spock. Yes!'"

And, of course, the last line of the movie was not the end of the story. With two successful *STAR TREK* movies under his belt as a producer, Bennett had achieved something extraordinary – taken a long-ended television series and turned it in to a movie

franchise – and he knew that there would be a *STAR TREK IV*. "We had such unfinished business," he concludes. "We had such a thrust. Yes, we brought Spock back, but what is he? He's a shell of himself, and these guys are in trouble. They've destroyed a starship and they're out there on Vulcan as wanted men.

"For the first time, I remember expressing to Leonard, who totally agreed, 'You know what we've done? We've completed act two of our trilogy.' That's really what carried us in to *STAR TREK IV* – the need to do a third act. Of course, at that moment we didn't know what it was going to be. Except we both knew we wanted to lighten up a little bit!"

# STAR TREK™

