Current status of Star Trek

From 8 or 9 years old I was a sci-fi fan, watched shows like Star Trek, Battlestar Galactica, Buck Rogers, Doctor Who (5th), Galactica 1980, The Incredible Hulk, V, Logan’s Run, you name it. All my life I watched Star Trek, always liked it, watched the original Star Trek, the movies, Star Trek: The Next Generation, but I guess that I really became a Trekkie in the early 90’s, 30+ years. Back then I taped The Next Generation episodes and kept them, purchased the Deep Space Nine and Voyager VHS video tapes and I watched the movies on Video-CD (CD-I). I purchased the UK Monthly magazines as also the North American Communicator, which I still own to this day. I purchased and read pocket books, I was a member of the Dutch Star Trek fan club The Flying Dutch and I went to Star Trek conventions. Star Trek was a very important part of my life, it was the best time to be a Star Trek fan. This has never gone away, I still regularly rewatch my Star Trek shows, I own the first five shows completely on physical media, including the movies.

I write this because I just want to show you how much I love Star Trek and it really hurts that after Star Trek: Enterprise, their was no new show to sink my teeth in. Yes, from 2009 on, we got 3 movies, which I obviously watched, but was not the same, I consider them sci-fi action movies, not Star Trek. When in 2015 or 2016 a new Star Trek show was announced, I was ecstatic, I was so happy that Star Trek was finally going to return to the small screen after an absence of 12 long years. The show named: Star Trek: Discovery. I already did have a Netflix account, so I knew there wasn’t any delay for me, since I lived in Europe.

When I first watched the show, the pilot, I wasn’t impressed, in fact, I was disappointed by it, by the Klingons, by the lead character not being a captain. Besides that, I didn’t like the character Michael Burnham, her constantly whispering annoyed me, I also did not find a click with the other characters, and the fact that she was Spock’s stepsister irritated me also. Although I did like the strangely acting captain, which later turned out to be from the mirror universe. Even though I was disappointed, I stuck with it for 3 seasons, because it was called Star Trek and I desperately wanted it to become better. When Pike was introduced in season two, I was relieved, he became the captain and at least that part seemed back to normal, although Michael Burnham still was the lead character. Because of captain Pike, I did have a positive feeling about season two. In part also because captain Pike so much reminded of Babylon 5 commander Jeffrey Sinclair.

In that same year, 2017, another TV show was released, a sci-fi show called The Orville from Seth MacFarland, a Star Trek fan, mainly a TOS and TNG fan. He created a show that did have a 90’s, early 2000’s feel of Star Trek, the Star Trek I so much love! No, The Orville was not perfect but it was at least 10 times better than Discovery, I could not believe Seth could make this but Paramount / CBS couldn’t or wouldn’t! This frustrated me also, to know it was possible, even in these times.

Meanwhile “Picard” was announced and when this happened I thought: Yes! Finally, my Star Trek returns! It was set after the failed movie Nemesis, so I was convinced that this would bring back the Star Trek we’d come to love from the 20th century, plus Enterprise. I actually did like the first season of Picard, although, in hindsight, this most likely is because of some feeling of nostalgia, seeing Data, Riker and Troi again. I wanted it to be good, I wanted it to have the same feel as the earlier shows, but it was totally different and I have to say I was set back by Patrick Stewart’s fragile presence. Of course I knew he was 80 years old by that time but I didn’t realize this until I saw it. His masculine voice from The Next Generation was no gone, as his strong presence. This is logical perhaps, but it still set me back. I was so much longing for my familiar Star Trek, that I just ignored the things that actually bothered me about the first season. I only watched the second season once, but this season really disappointed me. I already purchased the 1st season but I delayed the purchase of the 2nd season, because I just was disappointed by it. When the it was announced that the 3rd season would have all of the TNG cast in it, I caved in, because I knew I would purchase the 3rd season and I just wanted the set complete. I also purchased the first two seasons of Discovery, with regret in hindsight.

When they announced a TV show called “Section 31”, I really got even more frustrated, because the creators of Discovery treated Section 31 as if they were a legitimate organization, an organization which worked within the boundaries of Starfleet, an organization that was known to everyone who worked in Starfleet. I knew I was never going to watch that, because I didn’t want Section 31 to be ruined, it was a secret organization, only a handful of people inside Starfleet knew about them. I was happy when I learned they were going to make a movie of it instead of a TV show, which does not mean I am going to watch it, the trailer sucks big time but even if it did look good, I would skip it. Meanwhile, after I watched the 3rd season of Discovery, I was so disappointed with it, that I decided to stop watching Discovery all together, never seen another episodes since the 3rd season finale and don’t feel the need to every revisit the show again, which means, I am going to try and sell my first two seasons on Blu-ray.

In 2020 another new Star Trek show was announced, “Strange New Worlds”, with Captain Pike as the lead character, back to the episodic nature we were used from the Original series and The Next Generation. Although, I really like story-arcs, I still was very pleased by that news because again, I was hoping we would get a show that was closer to the first 5 shows than to Discovery or Picard. I fell for it again, I am a sucker when it concerns Star Trek.

Granted, I did like the first season of Strange New Worlds, yes, there were things that annoyed me, like why are there almost only women on the bridge, why is Spock not really respected by his coworkers, why did they kill-off the most interesting character. And of course I also realized the ship looks way to luxurious compared to the original series, where the captain has quarters as big as a ballroom. There were a few stories which I really liked, like the Gorn stories, so all in all, I was satisfied with the first season. The second season however, I found disappointing. You only have 10 episodes, what do you do, a f\*cking musical episode! A cross-over with the comedy lower-decks, dumbing down Spock even further, only one Gorn episode! What is even worse, after having doubted for a long time…I purchased season two on Blu-ray! I must be out of my mind. I will most likely watched the second season one more time and for sure skip the musical. Few months ago I got to see some season 3 footage and that did not make me very confident about the 3rd season. There even is rumored that there will be another musical. If this happens again on SNW, I will stop watching it for sure. If I know beforehand the start of the 3rd season, I won’t even start watching.

Meanwhile, in 2023, the 3rd season of Star Trek: Picard aired and that one I really did love! The Next Generation gang back together, the Enterprise D, I thought it was a perfect farewell season for these heroes. Finally, a Star Trek in this time that was really worth watching. And yes, in part it is nostalgic, because of these characters, I really loved it. Picard’s 3rd season and perhaps the 1st season of SNW I will most likely rewatch a number of times in the coming years, the rest I will most likely skip. I don’t think it will happen but if Star Trek: Legacy would finally be announced, I think I would give that show a shot, but Star Trek: Starfleet Academy I most likely will skip! Yes, it has Robert Picardo but I will leave it be. And if I then read some positive things about it, I might go and give it another shot.

I am done with this NuTrek, I have given it many chances, too many, but each time I get disappointed, the first five shows certainly aren’t all perfect, far from it, but these shows have a real Star Trek soul, characters you can relate to, most characters of these shows you actually like. Shows with a backbone. I would rather watch any of the first five shows than any of the NuTrek that is out there now. Having said all this, there momentarily seems to be a change coming, Paramount / CBS begin to realize (finally), that the franchise is in jeopardy, I sincerely hope thing will be changing in the coming years, because at this point, Star Trek as I know it, has ended in 2005, with the possible exception of Picard’s 3rd season.

Final Word:

I have been thinking about this topic for months now, I need to get this of my chest. I am a sucker for Star Trek and I let them fool me now for a couple of times, but no more, I am gonna skip Section 31 movie for sure, and very likely also that Starfleet Academy show, this is not my Star Trek, it is just rubbish. Why does Seth MacFarland’s The Orville, comes so much closer to the Star Trek I Love than what Paramount and associates have done? Because Seth is a fan from the first hour. A shame people from Paramount does not seem to grasp that, but on the other hand, do they care, we will see in the coming years if there really is something going to change, hopefully a breath of fresh air will make sure there will be a course correction.

Doctor Who and Star Wars have the same kind of issues. There also are rumors about a Stargate reboot, but I rather they leave it be, because it is very likely we would see the same kind of issues, it is these times, the political agenda is now more than ever more important than good storytelling.