

# Movie: Star Trek IV more fun

By Kathy Amen

*Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*. Directed by Leonard Nimoy; written by Steve Meerson, Peter Kirkes, Harve Bennett and Nicholas Meyer; produced by Harve Bennett for Paramount. Starring William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy. Rated PG (some mild vulgarity).

Christmas has come a little early this year for Trekkies everywhere. The bundle of cheer in question is *Star Trek IV*, and it is a delight.

Several of the old "Star Trek" TV episodes came closer to comedy than drama, and, for a change, so does this latest big screen feature. As in the old shows, not every joke works here. And some of the situations are contrived and even corny. But most of the time the dialogue is so witty and the characters so engaging that we can forgive a few lapses.

A lot of the laughs -- and a fair amount of the storyline -- do stem from references to the earlier movies in the series. So if you want to see *Star Trek IV* and it's your first, find a Trekkie (that shouldn't be hard!) and get a rundown on the stories of II and III before you go.

With very little recapitulation, *Star Trek IV* jumps right in where III ended. Admiral Kirk (Shatner), along with his loyal crew members, are returning to Earth from Vulcan to face the music. They stole -- and destroyed -- the starship Enterprise in *Star Trek III*. And no matter who you are, that kind of behavior doesn't sit well with the higher-ups.

Before they can turn themselves in, however, Earth gets more to

worry about than a handful of mutineers. An alien probe is hovering in orbit, emitting energy so powerful that it not only zaps all earthly machinery, but is quickly ruining the climate as well.

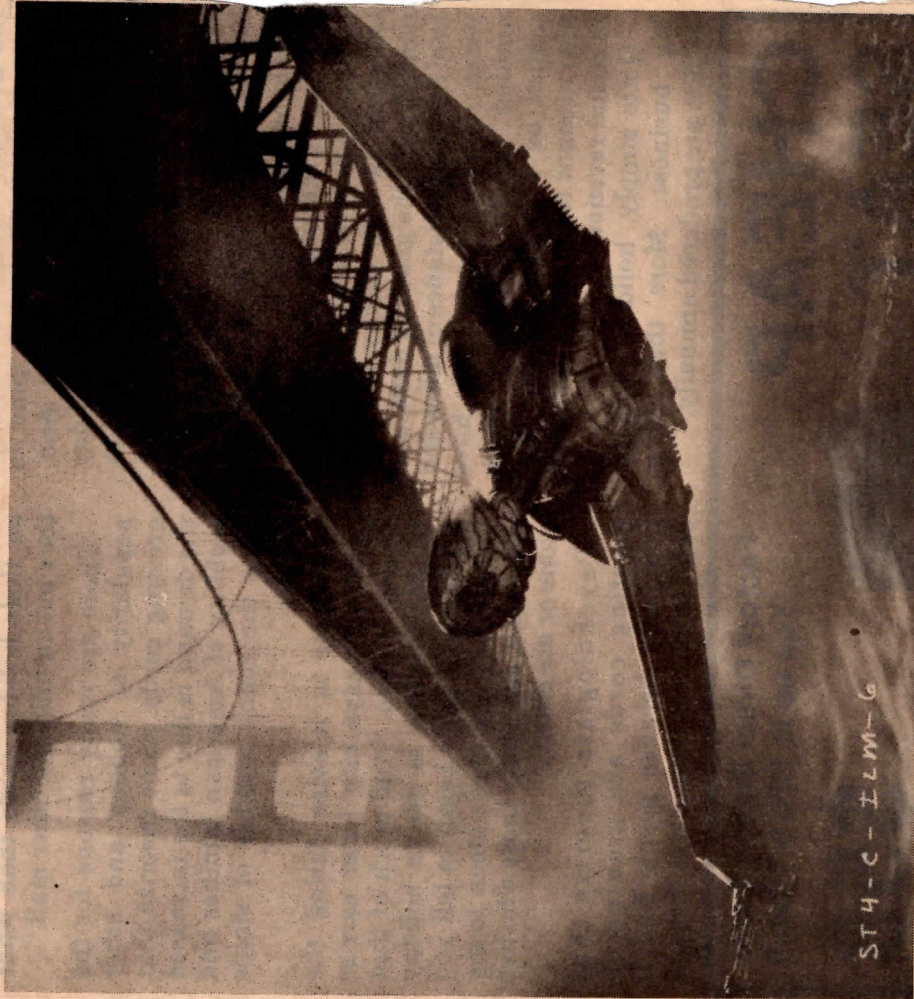
Typically, Kirk and Spock (Nimoy) need about two minutes to figure out what the probe's after. (When no one else has a clue.) Kirk's audacious plan to save Earth involves a time travel technique discovered by accident in one of the old TV shows. Zinging back to America, dateline 1986, the *Star Trek* crew have ample opportunities for comic bewilderment at our "barbarism" and gentle satire of our present reality.

There is a serious undercurrent in *Star Trek IV*, and I'm not talking about whether Earth will survive the alien probe. Whether we will survive the twentieth century's rapacious shortsightedness comes closer to it.

But the emphasis of the movie is definitely on humor and its outlook is unabashedly optimistic. Even the conventional perils of time travel are made light of. Will giving a plastics engineer the secret to a revolutionary chemical process alter the future? "Maybe he invented the stuff anyway," is the cavalier attitude.

All of the old favorite *Star Trek* characters are here, doing their familiar and well-loved bits. I guess true fans will never tire of this crew,

but I can't help wondering what will happen when they are really too old to go zipping about the universe saving planets in distress. Hopefully *Star Trek V* will start working in some new blood, building some new relationships, with an eye to the future. As cinematic art, science fiction and compelling drama, *Star Trek II* is still the best of the big screen *Star Treks*. But *IV* is the most fun. See it and get in a good mood for the holidays.



'Bird of Prey'

A Klingon "Bird of Prey" ship, carrying the crew of the U.S.S. Enterprise, loses power and dives at sickening speed toward San Francisco Bay in *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*. (Courtesy photo by Industrial Light & Magic)