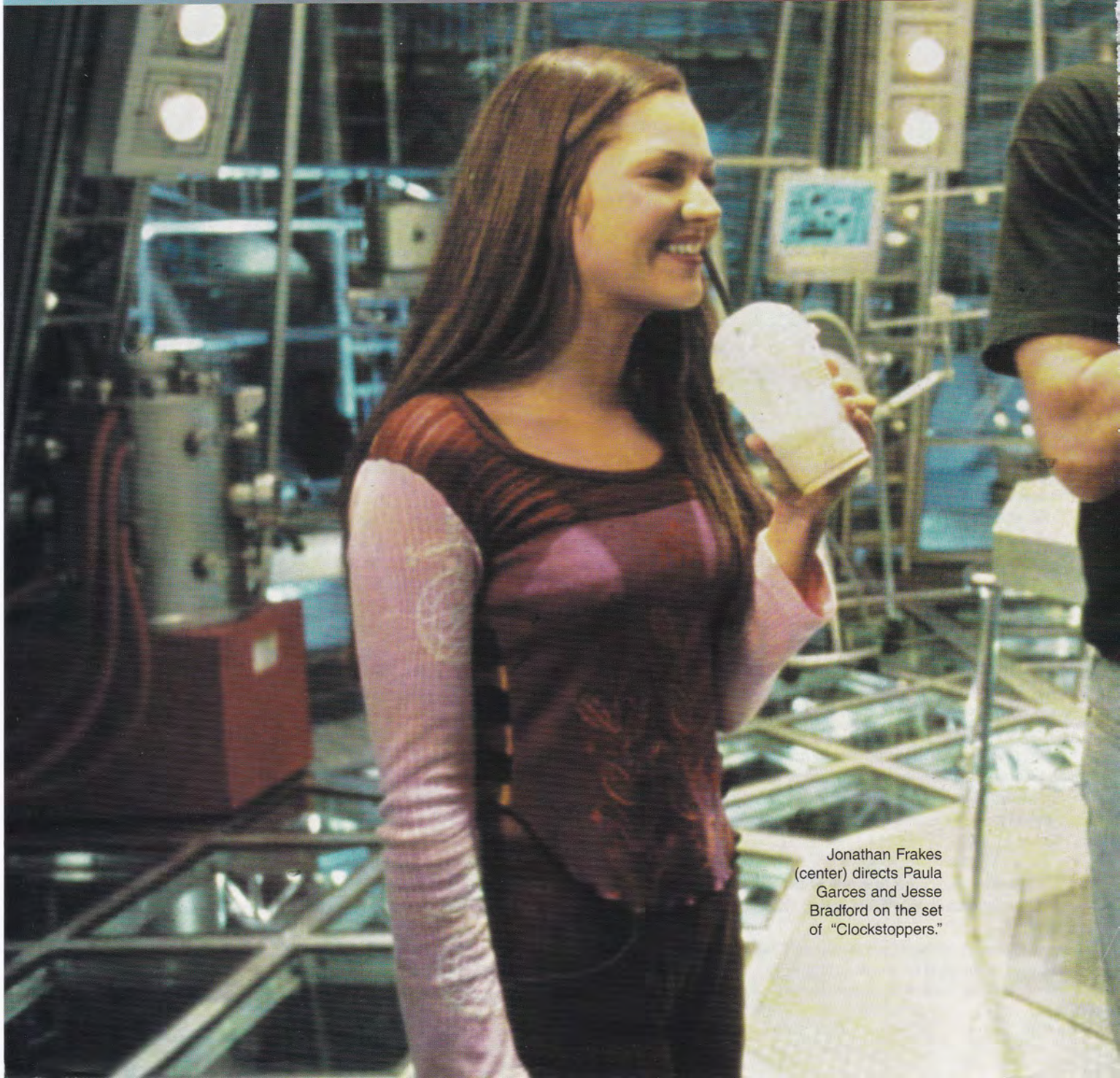


Back From The Future!



Jonathan Frakes
(center) directs Paula
Garcés and Jesse
Bradford on the set
of "Clockstoppers."

A photograph of Jonathan Frakes, a man with a beard and mustache wearing a black t-shirt, standing behind a younger man in a plaid shirt. Frakes has his hand on the younger man's shoulder. The younger man is smiling and holding a clear plastic cup with a white lid and a straw. They are in a studio setting with various pieces of equipment and monitors visible in the background.

**'Star Trek' Vet
Jonathan Frakes
Makes Time For
The Present With
'Clockstoppers'**

by Deborah Baxtrom

Jonathan Frakes is in possession of one of the world's most famous faces. Fifteen years portraying Enterprise first officer William T. Riker, a character introduced on the TV series "Star Trek: The Next Generation," has placed his bearded visage on a long succession of TV episodes, movies, book covers, cassettes, video games, and even theme-park attractions. The fact that Frakes has been honing his directing skills is far less well known, but that may soon change.

Having helmed the movies "Star Trek: First Contact" and "Star Trek: Insurrection" (to say nothing of more than 20 hours of series television), Frakes, 49, has just completed "Clockstoppers," his first feature directorial effort outside the "Star Trek" franchise.

A family sci-fi adventure from Paramount Pictures and Nickelodeon Movies, "Clockstoppers" centers on a teen who stumbles upon a special time-piece that allows him to enter "hypertime," where he can move at impossible speeds and become invisible to those in real time. Everyone around him appears frozen, so hijinks naturally ensue – until

he realizes that someone else is also searching for the unique device. He's soon compelled to deliver his family, and the world, from evil forces.

Educated at Penn State and Harvard, Frakes can trace his onscreen career back to guest parts on '70s TV fodder like "Barnaby Jones" and "Charlie's Angels," and a year-long stint on the NBC soap "The Doctors." Soon after completing his first season on "Trek," Frakes married "General Hospital" soap sensation Genie Francis, and the couple now has two small children.

"Trek" not only brought Frakes international fame, it launched his directorial career with a third-season episode titled "The Offspring." Frakes would direct seven more "Next Generation" installments before the series concluded in 1994, as well as three episodes each of its two spinoffs, "Deep Space Nine" and "Voyager."

In 1999, he became executive producer and occasional director of the WB's science fiction drama "Roswell," now concluding its third season. Frakes also recently sold to UPN a pilot for a series titled "Sons of Liberty."

On Jan. 25, just days after Frakes' *In Focus* interview, the Hollywood trade papers announced that he would direct a big-screen Disney thriller titled "Illusion," about a stage magician framed for murder.

When we caught up to Frakes, he was busily reprising his signature role on the set of "Star Trek: Nemesis," the 10th installment of the long-running motion picture series. Currently in post production and slated for November release, "Nemesis" will see Will Riker marry longtime love (and fellow Starfleet officer) Deanna Troi – and serve his last mission as first officer of the Enterprise.

How would you compare your experience on "Clockstoppers" to your prior directorial experiences? Were there different creative opportunities for you since you weren't building on a franchise?

Yes, it was exciting. "Clockstoppers" offered a whole new canvas with no preconceived ideas of how things should be. It was great to get off the Enterprise, to be honest. "Star Trek" is always intelligent and challenging but



Michael Dorn, Brent Spiner, Jonathan Frakes, LeVar Burton and Patrick Stewart, reunited on the set of "Star Trek: Nemesis," due this autumn.

All "Star Trek: Nemesis" and "Clockstoppers" photos ©2002 Paramount Pictures

it's nice to get outside of the family once in awhile. It was hard to get the studio to sign off on it; but they did, and they're pleased with the results. We achieved a lot of amazing visual effects in "Clockstoppers." We have some great frozen water effects. It's like a big fun-house.

Apart from the visual effects, what drew you to "Clockstoppers"?

I liked the sense of fun – it's like "Back to the Future." And it's a father/son story. That attracted me. I liked the kind of pop culture genre that I was able to go to instead of the pristine 24th century. Everything is always a certain way on

"['Clockstoppers'] happened very, very quickly, I think because of the success of 'Spy Kids.' All the studios were clamoring to get family fare productions."

– Director Jonathan Frakes

the Enterprise.

Did you go after the project or did it come to you?

I was working with Nickelodeon on another script called "Interstellar Pig," which we're still trying to get going. We already knew each other, so when "Clockstoppers" got fast-tracked it just happened to click.

Can you go into any specifics on how you shaped the material?

This was a movie that was in development for at least five years. Gale Anne Hurd, of "Terminator" and "Armageddon" fame, bought it originally and is the producer, along with Julia Pistor of Nickelodeon. The script had at least three sets of writers before I came on. After looking at all the different versions I suggested we go back to the Rob Hedden version, which was the original one that Gale had bought. It really had a great sense of fun and adventure, and much of that had been squeezed out of it in some of the later versions. So that was the template. Then the "Rugrats" writers, who are now writing "Shrek 2" – they're called the Daves, Dave Stem and Dave Weiss – wrote the shooting

script. It happened very, very quickly, I think because of the success of "Spy Kids." All the studios were clamoring to get family fare productions.

So how did you make the material your own?

It was very much a collaboration. There were a lot of hours spent with the writers beating out the story and it's become everybody's. Julia, Gale, the writers, myself...we spent, I can't tell you how many hours in the Nickelodeon conference room working on the beats and all those primary colors. It was a good team.

What sort of audience do you anticipate you'll reach with "Clockstoppers"?

It's a kid's movie. It skews to about fourteen. The kids in the movie are probably seventeen, so the audience aspires to be seventeen. It's full of action but it doesn't have bad language in it. There's no gunplay, no gratuitous sex. I've gotten to the point where if I'm going to spend a year on a project, at the end of it I want to say to my kids, "Here's where Dad's been." That's why "Star Trek" is great because you can be very proud of

(continued on page 44)



Jonathan Frakes

(continued from page 14)

where you've been when you've been gone for 80 hours a week. The same thing is true with "Clockstoppers." Nickelodeon ... their brand and their philosophy are the same as mine. They really are a family company. They believe in the family and we shot in the United States because of that. We wanted to encourage production to stay in LA because so many people we know – grips and make-up artists – are losing their houses because of all the production going to Canada. At Nickelodeon they put their money where their mouth is, which I really respect.

What aspect of "Clockstoppers" are you proudest of?

The pace – it's like a train. It takes off and doesn't stop until the end of the film, I hope.

That's a bit of a change from the pace of "Star Trek."

(Laughs) Yeah, in "Star Trek" we often have what we like to call "necessary breathers."

Now that you've directed a fast-paced action film – your first feature outside of the "Star Trek" franchise – do you think you like directing better than acting?

I've started to say "yes" to that question. I find doing both – as I've done for the last month since we were shooting the "Star Trek" movie – that I'm enjoying the directing part of my life more than the acting part. The best part of acting for me now is getting together with my friends from "Star Trek."

Apart from playing Commander Riker, what sort of role would you like to see come your way?

A musical comedy. That would be fun.

What aspect of directing do you find most gratifying?

I like working with the actors. I like blowing stuff up as much as anyone and I love the big days when you've got six cameras and two thousand extras and explosions and all. That's a blast, but I think I still enjoy [working with actors the most].

What is your method of working with actors?

I take each actor's emotional temperature. I have a very playful approach to the work and if an actor is willing to play I'm happy, but if they're more serious or "method-y" I'm happy to approach it that way too. I approach actors the way they're comfortable working.

How do you think your years of experience as an actor has helped you as a director?

I think that's one of the things that...I think actors make good directors. I think that [a director] is crazy not to take the input from the actors. I'm always amazed at directors who so staunchly believe that their way is the only way. Especially with actors who have been playing roles for 15 years as it's been on "Star Trek." We know these characters, just like on a soap. Nobody knows the characters better than the people playing the parts. In general their instincts about the part are at least worth considering.

Do you find it more interesting to direct feature films or episodic TV?

I think you get to do more when you direct a feature. With episodic TV it's like fighting the clock from the moment you step on the stage. And the characters, at least the regular characters, are already in place, so there's not much you can do except to keep your eye on them. You're not creating any new characters, with the exception of the guests.

Who are your filmmaking influences? Do you have any favorite directors or films?

My favorite directors to watch are Martin Scorsese and Robert Altman. Sydney Pollack. But when I was preparing [to direct] the "Star Trek" movies I stole a lot from the great action directors. I always steal from Spielberg and I steal from Ridley Scott.

You're not directing "Star Trek: Nemesis," correct?

No. Stuart Baird is directing it.

Did you want to direct "Nemesis"?

I wasn't asked. It would have been nice to have been asked.

How about in the future? Would you like to direct another "Star Trek" feature?

I never say never. There'll be another "Star Trek" feature after this one.

Do you find it strange that you're only offered sci-fi projects? Are you compelled to take steps to move beyond the genre?

Absolutely. It's tough to get them to sign off on other things, but we just sold a Revolutionary War pilot to UPN. It's called "Sons of Liberty." I like to call it "Brother Jonathan," which is the code word that they used to get into a safe house to the cause. Like, to get into a tavern that was having a secret meeting of the Sons of Liberty they'd say, "Is Brother Jonathan here?" (Laughs.)

That's appropriate.

Yeah. So we're psyched. We sold that a couple weeks ago, got the notes and the script last week. The networks have all been trying to find patriotic stories, so we're hoping they say go ahead and make the pilot.

What genre is "Sons of Liberty"?

It's straight ahead action. We hope it gets made. That's the next step. They have to sign off on it and spend the money to make it. It won't be cheap to do a period piece.

If they sign off, will you star in the series?

I doubt it. It's mostly young people in "Sons of Liberty." I don't fit that role anymore. But I'm hoping to put Genie in "Sons of Liberty."

Speaking of your wife, would you like to act with her in a project?

I would love to. We're looking for something now that we can do together.

An item at the "Ain't It Cool News" Website suggested you're contemplating a "Roswell" feature. How far along is that?

Well, there's a two-hour "Roswell" episode coming at the end of this season which will certainly play like a feature. I think I probably said that thinking it would be a cool idea.

So you haven't played around with scenarios yet?

No. I think that the cast and the premise would make a great feature, like "X-Files."

Any word of a fourth season for "Roswell"?

We're what they euphemistically refer

to as "on the bubble." (Laughs.) That means we're waiting to see.

You're executive producer on "Roswell"; how has that experience been?

I like that show. I haven't had as much to do on it since "Clockstoppers" because I've been busy elsewhere. I think "Roswell" has a really dense, interesting combination of voices – the teen angst and the alien mythology. I'm very proud of that show. I wish more people watched but it's in a very tough timeslot. It's a wicked timeslot.

Maybe they'll move it.

Well, we were taken to UPN as a partner to "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," so it's going to be tough to separate the two. We'll see what happens. One never knows, do one.

Whatever happened to "Steve Was

Here?" What's the alien bent in the "Steve Was Here"?

Well, it's a long story, but a man creates an alien in his mind and it turns out to be real.

You've described getting cast on "Star Trek" 15 years ago as a "life-altering" event. Any interesting stories about this? Did you beat out any now-famous actors for the part of Riker?

Bill Campbell, who's now on "Once and Again," was the other Riker. He and I were the ones who went head to head for Riker. He guested on the show. He played the "Outrageous Okona." Now he's got a wonderful hit series so I don't think we have to worry about Bill.

Were you ever considered for any roles other than Riker?

- I don't think so. Not that I'm aware of.

In "Nemesis" your character is



Frakes on the set: "I have a very playful approach to the work and if an actor is willing to play I'm happy, but if they're more serious or 'method-y' I'm happy to approach it that way too."

Herc," a project you mentioned you were working on in the past?

Dean Devlin's got a new deal at Paramount. He and I and Lisa Olin, who's my partner, and Norm Steinberg who wrote "My Favorite Year," were working on it when Dean was at Centropolis. So now I'm hoping that, because of my relationship there and his new relationship that we can rekindle that movie. I think it's a wonderful black comedy that I think would do very, very well. It's got that ... every [film] that I'm attached to seems to have some alien bent.

preparing to leave the Enterprise to take on his own command. Will you still be a part of the features after "Nemesis"?

I certainly hope so.

What's the best thing about being a part of the "Star Trek" phenomenon?

The best thing has been the friendships.

How do you stay in contact with the other cast members now that you're not on the show every week? Are you still close?

We go to dinner and talk on the phone. That's been the best part of doing

"Nemesis" is that they were there – family.

How are they doing?

LeVar [Burton] is all over the place. Patrick [Stewart] all over the place. Brent [Spiner] does movies all year long.

Is there any downside to being a part of "Star Trek"?

If there is a downside it's the pigeon-hole that we constantly try to fly out of and we've been very fortunate.

More so than the original cast.

Yeah. Exactly.

The "Nemesis" script was written by John Logan, who received an Oscar nomination for writing the "Gladiator" screenplay. How do you think "Nemesis" holds up in contrast to past scripts?

I think it may be our best script ever. Wonderful, big, action-adventure. Some great "Star Trek" themes.

Does it take us in a new direction?

Oh yeah. It's a return to some of the classic "Star Trek" roots, but it also has an imaginative new element.

Can we expect some surprises?

(Emphatically) Oh yeah!

But you won't give them away, will you.

You got it.

When does it come out?

Thanksgiving, I think.

And when is "Clockstoppers" being released?

"Clockstoppers" is Easter weekend, man – 29th of March!

One last question, since you've been so successful in parlaying your role as Commander Riker into an accomplished directing career, could you share the most useful professional advice you've ever received?

A number of pieces of advice have stuck with me. Some as simple as "tell the truth." Others... "Make sure you do something you love." Of course the golden rule always applies, especially in this business where you see the same people on the way up as on the way down. Oh, and – make sure that your shoes fit.