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No: 48 Winter 2014
US \$9.99 CAN \$11.99
Display until 15 April 2014



CAPTAIN'S LOG

Stardate: 67273.4

HAILING FREQUENCIES OPEN!

Email us at startrkmagazine@titanemail.com, about anything *Star Trek*, or write to *Star Trek Magazine*, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP

Space. It's infinite (near as dammit), but is it really the final frontier? Isn't there more to life than searching for what's "out there", when some of the most intractable mysteries of the universe lie within our own hearts?

This issue, we follow the journeys of a trio of impeccable Starfleet officers – Spock, Sisko, and Wesley Crusher – who chose (or were chosen) to step away from their careers to explore the meaning of life, the universe, and everything on their own terms. And those journeys exemplify what *Star Trek* is really all about. Yes, it can be swashbuckling adventures in space and, occasionally, time; yes it can astonish with amazing science-fiction ideas, or make analogous commentary on the issues of the day; but at its heart, *Star Trek* is about people – well-drawn characters and the choices they make. For all its fantasy trappings and photon torpedoes, it's about real life experienced by characters we love.

That's why we can't let them go, despite violent on-screen deaths or untimely cancellations by grumpy network bosses. It's why Spock was searched for. It's why J.J. Abrams could bring an entire shipload of characters back from TV's past with shiny new faces. It's why William Shatner's Kirk can be resurrected on the printed page to fight the good fight forever. Chances are, *Star Trek* and its diverse, ever-expanding collection of characters will outlive all of us – and maybe somewhere along the line it really will discover the meaning of life. Let's hope not, eh? What else will the showrunners have to write about?!

We also revisit *Star Trek: The Experience*, speak to not one but two Christopher Pikes, in exclusive interviews with *Star Trek Into Darkness*' Bruce Greenwood and Sean Kenney ("The Menagerie"), turn the spotlight on galactic irritants Q and Trelane in archive feature 'Time's Arrow', and step through the looking glass to discover what inspired writer Jerome Bixby to create the Mirror Universe.

There's a lot to get through. Buckle up and Engage!

Christopher Cooper
Editor

"IT IS THE UNKNOWN THAT DEFINES OUR EXISTENCE."
BENJAMIN SISKI, *DEEP SPACE NINE*
"EMISSARY"

STAR TREK
CBS

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DISTRIBUTION

- US Newsstand Distribution: Total Publisher Services, Inc. John Dzielinski, 630-851-7683
- US Distribution: Source Interlink, Curtis Circulation Company
- Canadian Distribution: Curtis Circulation Company
- Australia/New Zealand Distributors: Gordon & Gotch
- UK/US Direct Sales Market: Diamond Comic Distributors
- UK Newsstand: Comag Henry Smith: 01895 433600

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STAR TREK: THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE VOL #1, ISSUE #48 (UK 1275)
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ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?

RELIVING *STAR TREK: THE EXPERIENCE*

Cast and crew photos courtesy of Vernon Wilmer Digital

Set and 360° images courtesy of Bryan Groulx/DigitalProperties.ca

By Christopher Cooper

Contributors: Vernon Wilmer, April Hebert, Larry Nemecek, Bryan Groulx, Marian Cordry, and John Van Citters.

There was a moment when your heart skipped a beat, a single moment that every visitor to the hugely successful *Star Trek: The Experience* holds dear. It wasn't the thrill of the immersive Klingon Encounter ride, or the heady rush as excitable cast-members defended us from hordes of menacing Borg. No, it was the simple act of walking from one room and into the next... but what a room! A dream made real for any *Trek* fan – to stand on the bridge (like, the *actual* bridge!) of the Starship Enterprise-D.

Star Trek: The Experience, which ran from 1998 to 2008 in a specially constructed complex in the Las Vegas Hilton, was the stuff of dreams. It gave us all the chance to leave the 21st Century far behind and spend a few short hours visiting Gene Roddenberry's impeccably crafted future...



- Over the course of 10 years, *Star Trek: The Experience*'s two main attractions performed over 175,000 shows.
- Daily performances would start at 11am, running throughout the day until the final curtain call at 11pm. There were 72 shows every day: That's 36 Klingon Encounters and 36 Borg Invasions!
- 27 visitors would board the Enterprise-D for each Klingon Encounter, while the Borg Invasion 4D would scare the living daylights out of 48 guests.

"THAT RIDE IN VEGAS"

By Vernon Wilmer

An authority on the behind-the-scenes story of *Star Trek: The Experience*, Vernon Wilmer joined the cast in 2004, as Borg Drone 7 of 16 in the "Borg Invasion 4D" attraction.

"That ride in Vegas." That's how the director of *Star Trek: The Tour* referred to us in a 2008 magazine article. Much more than that, *Star Trek: The Experience* was a \$70,000,000 themed environment which ran at the Las Vegas Hilton for over a decade. *The Experience* included a recreation of the *Deep Space 9* Promenade, complete with merchandise shops (there were tribbles everywhere!) and Quark's Bar & Restaurant. The "History of the Future Museum" housed an enormous collection of *Trek* props and costumes. We also boasted two all-immersive attractions, "Klingon Encounter" and "Borg Invasion 4D". Everything was installed as a solid, functional setting (no vinyl backdrops here.) You could easily accept that you were in the world of *Star Trek* – and from 1998 to 2008, three million people did.

Our primary attraction, "Klingon Encounter", featured an incredible tour of the *Enterprise-D*. You were "beamed" from Vegas into the transporter room, escorted to the bridge by live Starfleet officers, treated to screen interaction with Jonathan Frakes as Riker and LeVar Burton as La Forge, turbo-lifted down to the shuttlebay

where you boarded the *Goddard* and launched into space to thwart the Klingons' temporal incursion (via a motion simulator and movie projector.)

"Borg Invasion 4D" took you to Copernicus Station, a facility developing defenses against the Borg under the direction of Robert Picardo as The Doctor, who interacted with you on screen. When the Borg unexpectedly attacked the station, your live Starfleet hosts led you through a frightening evacuation involving lots of phaser fire and assimilation by live drones. Escaping aboard the transport *Olympia* (a massive digital 3D theater) you were then tractor-beamed into a Borg cube, assimilated by Alice Krige as The Queen, and rescued by Kate Mulgrew as Admiral Janeway aboard *Voyager*. Walk-around characters were on constant patrol throughout the *Deep Space 9* Promenade. Klingons, Ferengi, Romulans, Andorians, Bajorans, Vulcans, and Borg. Clad in official

Vernon Wilmer defends Starfleet



Paramount costuming and Michael Westmore make-up, these actors knew every detail of their alien roles, and were amazingly prepared should any Trekkies test them.

The Experience also conducted weddings on the *Enterprise* bridge, and hosted special events featuring *Trek* celebrities. Our resident character actors embarked on various "away missions", entertaining Trekkies abroad, participating in charity events and reading books to school children. Many awards and accolades were earned by all of *The Experience's* departments during its run.

Trekkie or not, it was the best workplace and playground in the Galaxy – the employee doors even "swished"!

"YOU COULD EASILY ACCEPT THAT YOU WERE IN THE WORLD OF *STAR TREK* – AND FROM 1998 TO 2008, THREE MILLION PEOPLE DID."



SCRIPTED REALITY

Before the "Borg Adventure 4D" ride joined the party in 2004, there had been no need for a "Klingon Encounter" suffix for the main attraction. The ride stood on its own, which is why the script, penned by *Deep Space Nine* and *Next Generation* veteran Rene Echevarria and *Voyager*'s Ken Biller, was simply entitled "*Star Trek: The Experience – The Ride*."

The two were old friends but had never worked on the same *Trek* together until this most unusual project – a month-long gig over the summer hiatus of 1995 that stretched into two years of tweaks. Usually, the scripts for rides created by Landmark Entertainment would be written in-house, or contracted out, but *Star Trek*'s then-executive producer Rick Berman insisted two experienced show writers jump in to craft the story when Landmark's first effort was considered less than stellar.

In that first non-studio draft, visitors chose a Klingon or Starfleet persona, and each group decided upon a captain and first officer who made command decisions for the rest in completing a mission, based on options outlined on player cards.

"Everybody on the bridge would have to vote for the right outcome in order to save the universe, and if they didn't vote then I guess the universe got destroyed," Biller joked, back in 1998.

"What we first started talking about was that it should be a celebration of

Star Trek, and what *Star Trek* means," Echevarria adds. "I told Ken Biller a story about how, when I was a kid, I used to fantasize about being out sitting on the dock, hearing the transporter humming, and Kirk and Spock being there and coming up to me and saying 'René, we need you for a mission!'"

"So we really wanted to tell a coherent story in which the audience was sort of a protagonist," Biller goes on. "And we hit on this idea of saying, 'Well, how can we do this so you don't have to pretend to be anything other than what you are: a tourist in Las Vegas? That is where the thing took off, and we later got this wild image of the space battle over Las Vegas.'"

The Klingon Experience motion simulator in action.



"We didn't know what actors we were going to get, so we wrote it with Jonathan [Frakes] and LeVar [Burton] in mind, and they agreed to do it," Biller says. "We wanted to get Patrick [Stewart] in it somehow; they just assumed he would not appear in it, but René really pushed for it." Thus, the captain's "thank you" message would meet the ears of thrilled visitors at the story's end.

Biller and Echevarria were handed three plot musts: a shuttle ride, a bridge visit and a transporter effect. Plans for a live "beam-out" effect using mirrors were abandoned when it became clear the workings of the trick would be clearly visible to those still waiting in line, potentially ruining the illusion for everyone.

• Larry Nemecek

Copernicus Station under attack in Borg Invasion 4D.





Klingon Experience inside the shuttle

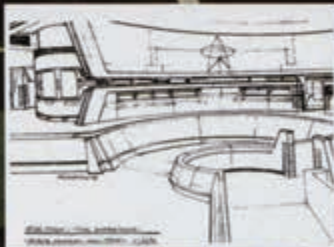
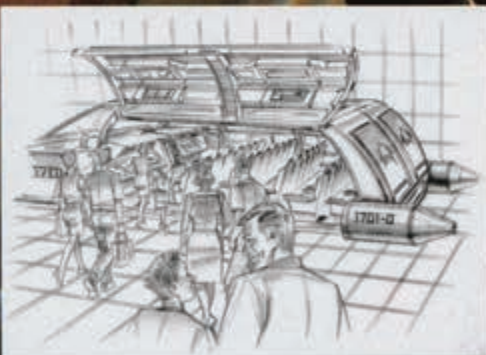
TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

When he learned that *Star Trek: The Experience* was to close its doors forever, *Trek* fan and professional photographer Bryan Groulx embarked on a unique mission to preserve its memory for posterity. "I first visited the facility years prior as a tourist (and avid *Next Generation* fan) and had no idea what the 'Klingon Encounter' attraction actually was," reveals Groulx. "Thinking it was going to be a simple motion simulator ride, I was going in blind. I was completely unprepared for what I was about to see when the turbolift doors opened and our group stepped onto the bridge replica for the first time."

Groulx's experience matches that of many fans, blown away by their brush with *Star Trek*. "It was absolutely breathtaking," he continues, "so much so that I missed most of the initial exposition on-screen because I had to concentrate extraordinarily hard to keep in-check the flood of overwhelming emotions I was experiencing. It was absolute perfection. Over the years, each subsequent visit to *Star Trek: The Experience* was more enjoyable than the last. Shopping at the Promenade, eating 'The Wrap of Khan' at Quark's, experiencing the Borg Invasion 4D ride for the first time, I literally felt like I could've moved in and lived there."

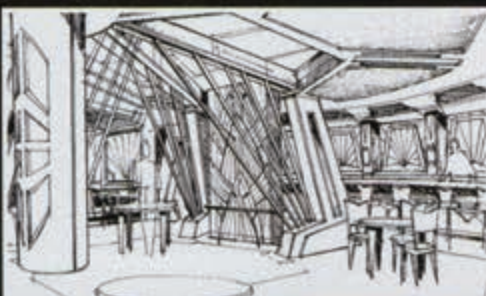
Thanks to his profession as a photographer, Groulx was in a position to offer a way to help keep *The Experience* alive. "When I found out it was closing, I immediately contacted the management and volunteered my company's 360° panorama production services to visually preserve this incredible franchise venue, because once it was gone, I had a strong suspicion it would be a long time before anything this endearing and unique would exist again."

Many of Groulx's evocative images feature in this article, and you can relive the experience in glorious 360° panoramic photography at www.startrek360.com



Star Trek: The Experience Promenade Level

Concept art and fire exit map



THE BEST JOB IN THE GALAXY

April Hebert was the first member of *The Experience* cast to work at the attraction – before it even opened – and the last to leave. *Star Trek Magazine* asked her what it was like to experience *The Experience*.

Star Trek Magazine: Were you a *Star Trek* fan before you were cast in *The Experience*?

April Hebert: Captain Kirk was my first crush! And when Spock died in *Wrath of Khan*, I sobbed like a baby in the theater; when the *Enterprise* was destroyed in *Search for Spock*, I jumped up and yelled at the screen "That's MY ship, you can't do that to my ship!!" Boy, was my husband embarrassed... that's why I have a different husband now. So yes, I've been a *Trek* fan for decades. But I never went to a convention until I was paid to go.

STM: What did the audition process involve, and how did you feel when you got the job?

AH: The original auditions for *Star Trek: The Experience* took several days, and over 5000 people auditioned for about 120 available parts. Lots of actors came to Vegas from the LA and Phoenix areas to audition as well. I actually had an "in" because I had worked with the show director before, he wanted me to come audition because he knew I liked *Star Trek*. However, I didn't get any special treatment and had to do exactly the same thing everyone else did – a movement audition, an improv audition, and a cold reading. Ten at a time, we got up in front of the crowd of about 200 and were given scenarios to which we responded in groups and individually; those of us who made that first cut came back later to read for specific roles. A few people came dressed in Starfleet uniforms or as Klingons, but none of them made the cut because they weren't really actors, just Trekkies who really wanted to work there. I was one of the few actors who considered myself a Trekkie, but of course I was a trained actor first and foremost.

STM: You were the first actor to be cast. Tell us about those early days on *The Experience*. How steep was the initial learning curve?

AH: Actually, I was cast in May of 1997 along with the others, but I was the first to be brought in to the construction site (along with Kerstan Szczepanski) on August 4, 1997 to work with the contractors on the moving parts of the ride, including the transporter room, the turbolift,



and the shuttles. *The Experience* was behind schedule, and the contractors needed people to run tests on the equipment. They couldn't spare any of their workers, so the show director talked them into bringing a few actors on early. The argument was that we were going to end up running this equipment, so we should have some idea how it worked. Kerstan and I were issued hard hats, and we spent long days running test cycles on equipment while construction went on all around us. It was a lot of fun; I climbed up and down ladders to check hydraulic lines, I learned how to swear like a sailor conversing with the construction guys, and ended up watching the whole place come together. It was amazing!

When the construction was finally complete in early November, the rest of the cast was brought in and we had our uniform fittings. I was chosen as one of the actors to do the original blocking with the script. We worked with the show directors, running the show day in and day out for people like Rick Berman, and stars



like LeVar Burton and Leonard Nimoy. Once the show got the "okay" from all the bigwigs, we trained the rest of the cast. One of the most exciting things that happened in those early days was a visit from Captain Dale Dye, a former Marine who works as a consultant for practically every movie that includes military scenes (he had just come from working with the cast of "Saving Private Ryan"). He kicked our asses for two days straight! I never worked so hard in my life. At the end of those two days we were issued our uniforms, got dressed and stood at attention in the Grand Corridor while he inspected each one of us. And after that, we were Starfleet Officers. I don't think I've ever been prouder of myself.

STM: Your roles were designed to blur the boundary between the *Star Trek* universe and the Nevada heat outside. How do you approach that very particular form of interactive performance?

AH: *Star Trek: The Experience* had its own backstory that explains its existence in Las Vegas. Just like *Deep Space 9* was a space station, *The Experience* was a Federation "time-station" that had been placed in our time period in order to monitor humanity and make sure that no unauthorized temporal incursions took place (after the potential catastrophe of the Borg incursion of *First Contact*, the Federation decided they needed to keep an eye on things). The whole "theme park" thing was a cover for its actual purpose.



April Hebert as T'Pol



When guests entered the attraction, they were actually stepping into the future. There were of course humans who were actual 20th and 21st Century employees (servers, bartenders, retail people, etc.); then there were Starfleet officers, Klingons, Ferengi, and eventually Borg, Vulcans, Andorians, and Romulans who either visited or were assigned to the station. Each of them had a purpose, a mission, and a distinct character and reason for being there.

I started out as a Starfleet officer working in the ride; our lines were mostly scripted, although there was sometimes room for improvisation. Day after day, year after year, we said the same thing many thousands of times. But for my part, I always tried to remember that for at least one person in the crowd, it was their first time. It helped me to be "in the moment."

After a few years, I no longer worked in the ride; instead I became two distinct and very different alien characters, interacting in the guest areas of the attraction (Quark's, the Promenade, the History of the Future Museum). I portrayed T'pol, a former Starfleet officer who resigned her commission to become a Professor

with the Vulcan Science Academy; she was considered an expert on the human condition, and spent much of her time observing and commenting on the frailties of humanity. I also portrayed Commander Tahryn of the Andorian Imperial Guard, a very frustrated and annoyed character who felt she had been assigned to the time station as punishment and spent most of her time trying to get the hell out of there!

Those of us who portrayed alien characters had to maintain those characters at all times when we were out on the floor. We had personal interactions with everyone who came through the doors; some of them were simply curious tourists, but others were real Trekkies who knew their stuff! Many of them were delighted to finally get to interact with a real alien; but some of them wanted to see if they could trip us up. That rarely happened, and most of them went away happy. Some of them became regulars, and those people are now some of my dearest friends.

STM: The closure of the show was an emotional time for those who lived it day to day. How hard was it to adapt to reality? What did you do next?

AH: It's still hard!!! I can't watch the decommissioning ceremony without blubbering like a baby. I think because it was such a big part of my life for so long, and the people that I worked with became my family, I am emotionally attached to everything that is, and was, connected to *Star Trek: The Experience*. However, I was lucky enough to be able to move on immediately to something else I love – teaching. I am a tenure-track instructor in the Department of Communication at the College of Southern Nevada. I teach Public Speaking, Interpersonal Communication, and Small Group Communication. I've done a few acting gigs since we closed, but seriously, my full-time job keeps me very busy.

STM: What was it that made *Star Trek: The Experience* so special for so many people, and what did you take away from it?

AH: Just like me, many people over the years have been inspired by *Star Trek*. I met engineers, scientists, and doctors who said they chose their profession because of *Trek*. I think the fact that we made it "real" for them, that they could be there, talk to us, and immerse themselves in something that before had only been an idea; that was what made it special. They could sit at Quark's Bar, drink a Romulan Ale, and get hassled by a Ferengi – how could it get better than that? They could stand on the bridge of the *Enterprise*, something they only dreamed about before. Over the years, I saw people come onto the bridge with tears in their eyes; as they passed me they would whisper "You are so lucky." They were right; for eleven years, I had the best job in the Galaxy.



The final cast of *Star Trek: The Experience*



The cast receive a pre-shift briefing

DECOMMISSIONING

The emotional task of deconstructing *Star Trek: The Experience* fell to Marian Cordry and John Van Citters, *Star Trek*'s guardians at CBS Consumer Products.

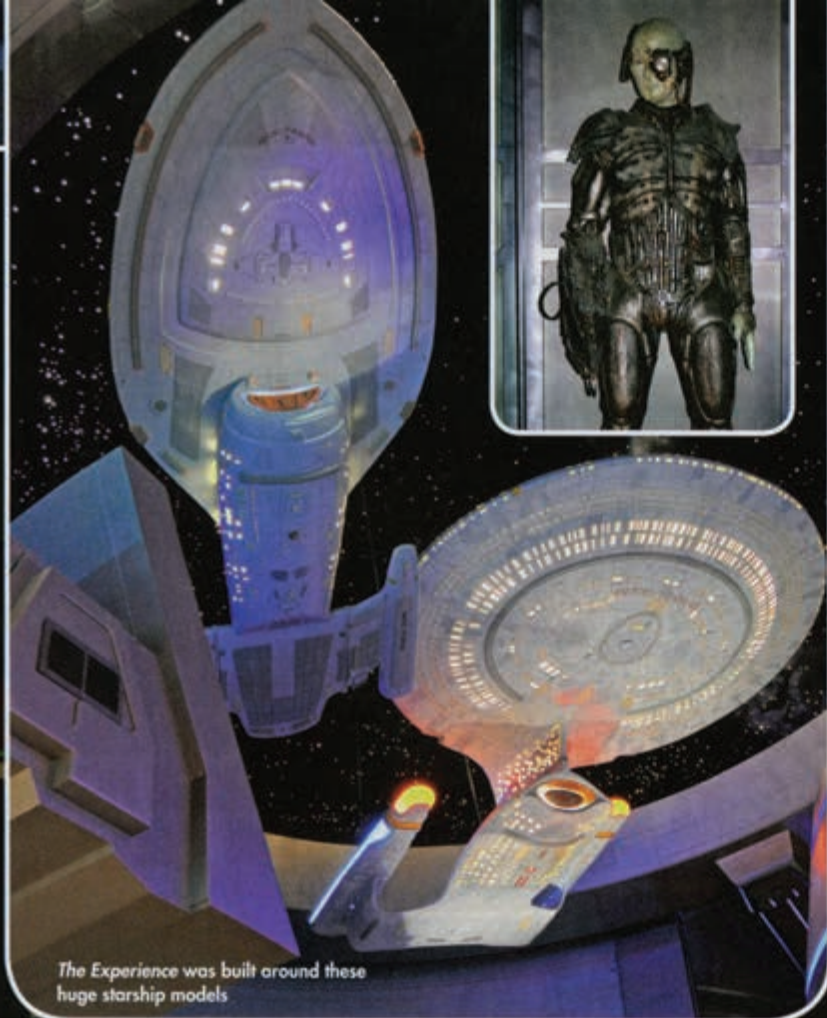
"When we arrived at the Hilton for the decommissioning ceremony, I was not surprised to see the number of people in attendance," says Marian Cordry, CBS Consumer Products' Manager of Product Development and Archival Materials, "but I guess I hadn't prepared myself adequately for the emotional response the closing created, both amongst the fans, the staff, as well as myself."

"That day was very emotional. Fans and staff were there to say goodbye to each other, and to say goodbye to such a special place. This place to meet, greet each other, eat together and – for the staff – a place to work together, was going away. We felt particularly bad for the staff and crew. They loved their jobs, *really* loved their jobs. Imagine being so passionate! Most fans would never have the opportunity to visit the actual stages and sets on which *Star Trek* was filmed. *The Experience* was the next best thing. But it was better – it *belonged* to the fans, and became over the years the central destination for fans to congregate."

Sent to undertake the unenviable job of breaking down the exhibit, the team only had a few days to inventory, break down, carefully wrap up and remove hundreds of priceless objects, large and small. But work wouldn't begin until the next day.

"What happened next was the fans and most of the staff left the facility for the last time, but John and I then had to gear up, physically and mentally, for something neither of us wanted to do," Cordry explains, "[It was] bittersweet and surreal. We had to simultaneously remember what a happy place this was, admit it was

"IT BELONGED TO THE FANS, AND BECAME OVER THE YEARS THE CENTRAL DESTINATION FOR FANS TO CONGREGATE."



The Experience was built around these huge starship models

to be no more, and get into the mental space needed to break and close it down forever."

The process proved to be both emotionally and physically demanding, but with its own unique rewards. John Van Citters, VP Product Development, CBS Consumer Products, continues the story. "We arrived early and began the long, arduous process of removing artefacts from the museum cases, photographing and logging them, evaluating their condition and carefully wrapping and boxing them. While it was a great deal of fun in many respects to have the opportunity to work with so many props and costumes up close and personal, it was a very difficult week and process. Everything took much longer than anticipated and there were always unforeseen issues to contend with,

such as items that had originally been glued in place and were very difficult to remove without breaking, or the great difficulty we had in removing the massive Klingon throne from its case, and discovering just how heavy a six-foot rubber Borg actually is!"

"One silver lining was the chance to see these props and costumes up close," agrees Cordry, "I was particularly impressed with some of the costumes. Up close, you could see the meticulous care that went into their construction, as well as

the whimsy of some of the materials used (the Ferengi outfits come to mind). But it was a bit overwhelming, so we decided to start where the prop and costume glassed exhibits started: at the beginning."

One block at a time, the pair opened display case after display case, starting with the *Enterprise* cases (the 'History of the Future' exhibit was laid out in the chronology of the *Star Trek* universe, not as broadcast on TV), working their way through every iteration of *Trek*. The exhibit enclosures had very small crawl spaces to access the costumes and mannequins, as Cordry attests. "Getting everything out of their enclosures was a very physical, laborious job, with plenty of run-ins with sharp corners, and sometimes even sharper props. I still have a scar on my arm where I accidentally brushed up against a sharp object in one of the cases, nearly slicing my wrist open. I told myself it was *The Experience's* way of telling us it wouldn't go without a fight."

A skeleton crew of *Experience* staff were also on-site to break down the offices and pack up what remained of the once-busy shops. The atmosphere in the once-thronging corridors was surreal and, occasionally, spooky – thanks in no small part to some of the last elements to be removed, as Cordry reveals, "The animatronic Borg weren't disconnected until later, so every time you passed them by in those deserted hallways, their beady eyes and laser eye-pieces followed you. Once their cases were taken down, we were able to get up close to look at them. Rubber or not, they projected menace. They still creeped me out!"



FINAL DESTINATION

As the deadline for finally closing off *The Experience* space within the Hilton rapidly approached, the props and costumes were removed and taken to an off-site storage facility. Only the specially created sets and dressings remained, including the giant models of *Enterprise* and *Voyager* that dominated the entrance.

"The hardest part of the breakdown for me was knowing what was going to happen to the massive model of the *Enterprise-D* that hung over the atrium," says Van Citters. "The model was brought in before the building was complete. We had many discussions about whether there was any way to get it out intact, but there was not."

"Special crews with cranes and equipment came in to take down things

like the ships," Cordry explains. "This was especially heartbreaking. These ships could not be taken out unless dismantled. Basically, the exhibit was built around them, so taking them out in one piece was not an option. We came back one day to find the Refit *Enterprise* in pieces on the floor. Very disheartening."

"The fact of the matter was that so much of *The Experience* was built to be a permanent installation. It just wasn't designed to be taken apart, transported and reassembled," Van Citters continues. "Nonetheless, anything that wasn't in the museum was taken down and transported to a warehouse in Las Vegas, including sets, signs, chairs, wall pieces, cast costumes, and more. About 15 months later, we held a warehouse sale so that the public would have the opportunity to have their own piece of *The Experience*, their own memories to take home with them. Some of the more premium

elements, the signs for Quark's for example, were held back and featured in an auction that August at the Vegas *Trek* convention."



The *Enterprise* in pieces

"WE CAME BACK ONE DAY TO FIND THE REFIT *ENTERPRISE* IN PIECES ON THE FLOOR."



Even the Borg need somewhere to rest between performances

ECONOMIC FORCES

Following the global economic meltdown of 2008 – the effects of which are being felt to this day – the continued existence of *Star Trek: The Experience* at the Hilton had become financially more complex.

"The parties involved explored a variety of options to keep the Experience open," says Cordry, "Whether that involved more time for break down, or to agree to stay open at least for a while beyond the 2009 movie release, thinking they would see a bump in traffic due to the movie's exposure. But different economic forces were in play at that time, making it difficult to keep *The Experience* open, and providing quite a challenge to find a new home. There was talk of taking certain set pieces, as well as the props and costumes, to another location, but *The Experience* sets were built specifically for this location. It became apparent we couldn't retro-fit these pieces into a new structure. The

Experience was built from the ground up, literally, and built with such attention to detail. It's what made *The Experience* so unique and so fantastic! It's what made moving it into a new space untenable."

The loss of *The Experience* is still keenly felt by fans, so is there yet hope that it could ever be revived? "We are always exploring options for similar types of attractions and live events," answers Van Citters. "However, *Star Trek: The Experience* as it was will never exist again. It would be foolish to try and recreate something that was so beloved and such a reflection of that specific time and place. *Star Trek: The Experience* was a success because of the people that were involved in it. Involved in its creation, involved in the day-to-day operation. The staff at *The Experience* were phenomenal. Getting to know those people and seeing how much they absolutely loved going to work, how much they loved interacting with fans and non-fans alike in the environment has been one of my favorite

parts of my job. But make no mistake, we could never create that same *Experience* again. Which isn't to say we can't create something equivalent or better. It's a high bar that's been left, but I'm anxious to try to surpass what was done."

"We're entering a really interesting time with *Star Trek* right now," Cordry concludes, "The most recent movies have brought yet another bold vision to *Trek*, and hopefully one day we'll see our beloved saga on television again as well. I want to think that at some point in the future we would have a new 'Experience' – but it will be relevant and unique to a new time and place, just like *The Experience* was. I really do believe it's *Star Trek's* ability to stay meaningful that will enable us to someday realize that dream of having another place to call our own."



Raul Faria in make-up



Dedicated to the memory of Tom Deishley