

Women at Warp Episode 111: Having a Disco Ball

JARRAH:

Hi. Welcome to Women At Warp: A Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. Join us as our crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name's Jarrah and thanks for tuning in. Today with me I have crew member Sue.

SUE:

Hi everybody!

JARRAH:

a.k.a. my number one.

SUE:

Aww!

JARRAH:

We also have two very special guests. We have Mahogany

MAHOGANY:

Hi.

JARRAH:

And Kenna.

KENNA:

Hi there.

JARRAH:

And we will let them introduce themselves more in a minute. But before we get into that we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. Our show is entirely supported by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron you could do so for as little as a dollar a month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media obviously watch along commentaries. Visit patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. Sue, is there any other housekeeping that I'm missing?

SUE:

Well, we do have our new patron tier": The spore jump tier, that includes extra bonus content. We had so many requests asking us to talk about non-Star Trek topics, plus our April Fool's joke where we asked for comments about C.J. Cregg from the West Wing, that we decided to make it real. So what at our new tier every other month, there will be a bonus podcast episode about something non-Trek.

JARRAH:

Can't wait to get it all up in that West Wing, Star Wars, Doctor Who stuff with you. All right. So back to our topic today which is Discovery Season 2. For that, I'll turn it over to the guests to tell us a little bit more about yourself, and I'll start with Kenna who has been on our show before. Kenna, why don't you tell us about yourself and your *amazing* podcast that just happens to share a network with us?

KENNA:

That's right. My name is Kenna, kind of. I'm one of the hosts of Priority One: a Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. We are your weekly report on all things Star Trek. So we have a weekly show that comes out on Friday and we cover everything from news, we do a little bit of episode reviews when Discovery is on the screen, we also tackle gaming news, and feedback. And let's see what else? Pretty much anything that you can include as part of Star Trek fandom, we cover. So comics, books, merchandise. We've been running for eight or nine years, like a crazy long time and we have a great team of people that do a great show. So anybody who's listening if you are interested please check us out. You can download us apple podcasts on Friday. We also do a live show on Tuesday which is kind of fun too.

JARRAH:

For more visit podcasts.Roddenberry.com. And Mahogany, how about you? Other than being my fellow Ottawan?

MAHOGANY:

Oh yeah. So- I'm not that really I don't run a podcast or anything. I'm just mostly a cosplayer. I'm also known as, I guess you could say the Canadian Michael Burnham? *Jarrah laughs* That kind of happens because of the Star Trek Las Vegas anyways? So yeah, I'm a huge Discovery fan. Which is why I'm here.

JARRAH:

Excellent. And I mean, you have a *lot* of cosplay talent. And in addition, I know that you have some particularly interesting insights on Discovery. So, glad to have you here for this discussion. So let's get right into it. We wrapped Discovery's Season 2. By the time this episode drops it will be about two weeks ago. And if you were tuning in to our last episode you had an opportunity to hear our interview with Mary Chieffo. And it's been a big season full of many new characters, twists and turns, and red angels, and time travels, and spore jumps, and explosions, and Michelle Yeoh kicking people in the face. And yeah. So we wanted to start out by talking a bit about some of the new characters, and there's a few to cover. But how about I start with Kenna, and ask you just one of the new characters that stood out to you?

KENNA:

There was actually a couple of new characters that stood out to me, that I really liked. See, I don't want to steal anybody's thunder, but hello Pike! *all laugh* I mean, he was the big one that premiered and, you know, at first I wasn't really on board with the hype. But Anson Mount has done a fantastic job with that character. I also think the writers have done a pretty good character, fleshing him out from the tiny amounts that we knew before. And I feel like he is now like a legit Star Trek captain, whereas before he was more of a trivia point. So he's probably the standout one for me. But I also really really love Nhan, and she's kind of been understated the whole time and I'm really looking forward to her expanding into Season 3.

JARRAH:

For sure. Mahogany, how about you? Did you want to talk about either Pike, or Nhan, or throw another new character into the mix?

MAHOGANY:

I'm really a fan of Nhan. Like, I love how she was fleshed out and everything, but also I still think she was a bit understated and deserved a bit more airtime in the show. Another one I really like who I think is understated is Jeff Reno. *noises of agreement* She's funny with a dry sense of humor. I mean, just the way she works with her hands to problem solve. I just like seeing a female engineer. It's very rare to see that in most media these days. So that was another one I liked too.

JARRAH:

And I think it was you know Stamets and Culber, which we will talk about more soon, I mean like the first you know openly gay characters on a live-action Trek series. And we had Tig Notaro as Janet Reno who we don't know anything really about her sexual orientation until later on, when she sort of makes a comment to Culber about her wife. And I just thought that was neat, because like both of them just show that, first of all you didn't just tick the box and decided you were done with queer characters, and then you got to see a whole bunch more of her personality. And then just had that *in there*, like a fact. Like it is with any character, that they don't always feel the need to like tell you right off the bat. But it's just now like, it's a given that you can't just assume that any character is gay or straight.

MAHOGANY:

It's a nice fluid progression into it, instead of like her coming out and being in your face you know with the whole queerness thing.

KENNA:

It's just another part of who she is.

MAHOGANY:

Yeah exactly. Nobody does that. It's part of who she is, and it comes out when the time is appropriate.

JARRAH:

Also with Nhan like, I agree. I didn't really feel until the very last episode in the second part of the finale that she was really felt like part of the team. But man I love those scenes with her and Georgiou at the end. Those were funny and I would just watch like a show about the two of them kicking people in the face now really. *Sue laughs*

KENNA:

You know it's funny that you say that, because I don't think Nhan did it ever feel a part of the crew. Because even the bits where she was like spying on Airiam, like she always kind of held back. And even in the last episode she was kind of like "if it's OK with you guys I want to come too." She always felt like an outsider really until the very end.

MAHOGANY:

Yeah yeah. She was portrayed in that sense too, that she was always on the sidelines too. And you could see just the little like glances and things like that too, that gave it away.

JARRAH:

How about you Sue? Who do you want to talk about?

SUE:

On the Pike conversation, *Jarrah laughs* I remember at the red carpet, at the premiere, that Anson Mount was talking about how we had already had like an act one for Pike in The Cage, and we had an act three for Pike in The Menagerie. So he and the writers wanted to create like, a reasonable act two to tell you more about this character, this captain. And I think they did a really fantastic job. And I have seen so many people saying "You know what? I have a new favorite captain now and it's Captain Pike" and he's moved up my list as well. I *obviously* love Number One. *laughs* I'm not a huge fan of what they did to her in the finale, which I wrote about a little bit in our recap and I don't know if you want to spend time on that now but-

JARRAH:

I think it's fair to mention.

SUE:

OK *laughs*.

KENNA:

I'm curious to hear. Because I, you know, I thought you loved Number One. But you make it sound like maybe there's a problem.

SUE:

So Number One is supposed to be like in- she was supposed to be the Spock before Spock was Spock. Right? She was supposed to be incredibly smart and incredibly logical. And the apocrypha around why everyone calls her Number One is because she was like of the first in

her year on her home planet of Valeria. And she's like the *most smart* one. Right? And she is our first officer, and our Helmsman. And in very early on in the finale episode, she's in that like telephone call with Detmer, where they split the screen?

JARRAH:

I really disliked that split-screen.*laughs*

SUE:

It was weird, but that's not my problem. *laughs* Yeah, Detmer says something to her about like "We're going to have to stay within this many arc seconds of blah-de- blah to make sure that Burnham doesn't die" or whatever. And she says in English "I can't blow a path through what you're saying." And I understand if they feel the need to explain arc seconds to the audience. But like, if I knew what they were in college in like astronomy 101, then Number One knows what arc seconds are. And would understand that. And they could have done something- they could have had another character ask that question. They could have had her respond with "Wow that's really keeping it close. We're gonna have to be careful." You know, something that gets that point across without making the helmsman of the flagship seem like she doesn't know what she's doing.

MAHOGANY:

Yeah. Okay.

JARRAH:

OK. So we know by this point that like, they speak many different languages on Discovery because of the sphere episode. And I just really dislike the "English, please" thing when it's like *ugh* I don't know. I just was like- so like you could have said like "Plain language, please" or something like that. You shouldn't also expect that everyone speaks English, like she's not Detmer's best friend.

SUE:

They also did that on Next Gen once or twice.

KENNA:

Do you think that the universal translator like translates that to like whatever language the other person is actually speaking? *Jarrah laughs* So it's like "Plain English" like the translator says like "Plain Tellerite" *all laugh*

MAHOGANY:

I mean potentially.

SUE:

Let's go with that, so it's not as bad.

MAHOGANY:

Offensive? Yeah.

KENNA:

Yeah. Undertones of xenophobia. Yeah.

JARRAH:

Kenna, what did you think of Number One?

KENNA:

I wanted to see more of her. I don't think, on the whole, they dumbed her down. I think that probably *that* scene was a little bit like, the writers used her as a as a exposition tool. Because you know, things like- there was a scene later on where she's, you know, she's proactively retrofitted everything in preparation. And I think on the whole they made her come across pretty smart and pretty quick. I would like to see more of that. I don't think we're going to. Which is kind of a shame, because I think that the crew of the Discovery on the whole they're all really bright and they're all really like go-getters right? But Number One came across to me as a really efficient subordinate. What you would expect more from a really professional military operation. Where the Discovery crew was not quite there, a little more loosey-goosey. So I was kind of looking forward to seeing more of her. But you know, we didn't.

JARRAH:

Yeah. One thing I was disappointed about was how when she- or when Pike was off the ship, at least were part of it, we're left to see that Cornwall is in commanding the ship, even though Number One could have been commanding the ship. And I was like "That was just a missed opportunity." But I did like her last scenes, with Starfleet questioning them about what happened. I thought that she was fun and interesting in that scene.

KENNA:

I laughed out loud when she says "I'm number one." *all laugh* That was very cute. I thought that was a cute little nod.

JARRAH:

Yeah. How about you Mahogany? Thoughts on either Number One or Pike?

MAHOGANY:

Well we've already discussed, as a person you know I'm not that big on Pike. Anyhow, Number One I feel like she deserved more airtime. I couldn't really form an opinion on her because I didn't really see her that much in the whole, you know, season. So it seems like they threw her in at the very last part and it seemed really rushed to me.

JARRAH:

Yeah. I am- on Pike I definitely wasn't expecting to love it. But I-

MAHOGANY:

I feel like indifferent to him. He's just there. I'm just "Meh."

JARRAH:

Yeah. I feel like he started out super strong and near the end of it, it kind of wore off a bit for me. After the whole time crystal monastery episode. But I don't know if that's just because everyone else had so much to do, and maybe- I don't know. I mean he started out so strong with that "We'll try to have a bit of fun along the way" and then I feel like actually his character and the whole season sort of like lost a bit of sight of that near the end. There was still, you know, hopefully one joke an episode but it was just a bit less of a sense of fun and exploration.

MAHOGANY:

It became that whole time travel thing at the end. So that whole sense of fun and exploration and science pretty much just went out the window. Yeah.

JARRAH:

"We just retcon-ed that." *Mahogany laughs*

KENNA:

I think they had an issue this season, that there was so much going on that they had no choice but to let us down a little bit in personality and character development. I do think there were probably a couple of people that got some really good on-screen time, but generally speaking we were so busy trying to explain the timey-wimey stuff that we didn't get any meaty interactions. Towards the end, I think the writers did a good job of having sort of one on one smaller conversations that helped build character. But overall I came away with a feeling of a lot of the major characters being underserved in terms of their screen time and their development throughout the whole story.

MAHOGANY:

Yeah. There are a few that stood out to me. Like I know the Saru episodes were really well done. You know with his whole Vaharai, and that whole thing leading up to that. But as far as the other characters go with- yeah the- basically being in a huge hurry seemed to be the theme of this whole season in my opinion.

SUE:

They did a whole lot.

MAHOGANY:

Yeah a little bit too much maybe, you know?

SUE:

Yeah. And that's what, you know, going back and looking at the episodes from this season we only had 14 of them. And I'm like "Oh right! *This* happened *this* season. Oh right. We were in the mycelium network with May this season-

MAHOGANY:

May, yeah totally forgot about that! That's what I'm saying, like it's just "Go go go!"

SUE:

Sooo much happened. And I think possibly to their detriment. Yet I have seen other people complaining about the pacing. *laughs* But the pacing has been go go go.

KENNA:

Now to be fair, we've had to separate- this is basically two separate seasons of Star Trek. Because for me the contrast between the first six episodes and the latter eight is pretty stark. Basically up until they got to Culber. And then it felt like the whole rest of the season was just trying to unpick the mess that they made *laughs* for the first six episodes. So it doesn't surprise me that you get people on both sides complaining that there's too much and also not enough.

JARRAH:

Yeah. I mean, I would agree. I think that the pacing was more of a problem actually in season one. I think it found more of a groove; it may have been too much in too short of a time. But like at least it was more consistent. That like, I mean Sue writing most of our recaps and I did it once and I was like "Holy- These take long to write now!" *all laugh*

SUE:

Yeah, when you're 20 minutes into the episode and you're at eighteen hundred words. *laughs* Oof!

JARRAH:

But like the second to last episode had *four* montages. *laughs* That's what- I thought the finale had the biggest problem in pacing. Maybe like the last three episodes. Because it slowed down in order to stretch it out to three episodes, but then was really fast at the end. Anyway. But we have a couple of other new characters to cover before we get to the more regulars. And I'm wondering Mahogany if you have any thoughts on either young Spock or Michael's mom?

MAHOGANY:

Young Spock, I liked his character. You know, I could see the progression in that relationship where it's sort of mending this whole little rift that they had over the years. As far as Michael's mom is concerned, I don't know what to say. She, you know, after seeing your daughter for so long and that's how you react? I just can't explain it, just something about her bothers me and I don't know what it is. *laughs*

KENNA:

I personally loved Michael's mom. I think they did a really excellent job with her, and I thought they made some really interesting choices. Because I think it would have been the expected and probably not realistic thing if she'd been all super happy "Oh Michael!" because she's been saving Michael. Over and over again. She's also seen her die a lot. And with however- what was it? Three hundred and something jumps? The past to her is no longer real. It's like a horrible video game that you have to keep- that you keep losing on the boss and you have to restart. And so I absolutely believed her when she was impatient and didn't have time for any of it and was like "Let's fix this. And then you and I can have our family moments." And I thought that was a really interesting choice, because they could have gone the easy and more understandable route of just being happy families.

MAHOGANY:

Yeah, I wouldn't say I like a happy family. But she seemed really like abrupt to me? So that's where I was like "Whoa! What is this?" Like, yeah.

JARRAH:

What about you Sue?

SUE:

Well, I'll take it to Spock. I think Ethan Peck did a really great job, because it's not easy to step into a role like that. But I especially loved baby Spock.

JARRAH:

Oh my God. So cute!

SUE:

But so cute, but also *really good*. Both of the kids. You know baby Michael and baby Spock were really good, and had some of the most moving scenes for me this season. And what I really appreciate with it is that, you know, Star Trek acknowledged how much childhood trauma- and yeah I do mean trauma. Even when I'm talking about insults. Can have a lasting effect on someone. And that is, I don't know. It was really moving to me and really kind of eye-opening to see Spock of all characters you know still be affected by something that was said to him as a child.

JARRAH:

Yeah. And I also really appreciated, and we had a good article on our blog about Spock's learning disability and integrating that into it. I think it, you know, showing the way that Sarek brutally mishandled that situation, and just generally parenting, sort of helped understand the intensity with which you would feel this sort of betrayal from Michael. And I think that it was really a really powerful statement to make. You know, similar to making you know LaForge the

blind navigator, to make like the smartest guy in Star Trek have a learning disability. I think that was a really cool thing to do.

KENNA:

Yeah, I feel like I should be the voice of dissent really quick. I really hated the inclusion of Spock in the entire thing. *all laugh* It's- I think they did- once the trigger was pulled on that decision to include him as part of the storyline, I think they did a relatively decent job of untangling it and giving us a little bit of color. But I think that had Spock not been there, and in fact had Pike not been there everything could have played out exactly as it did it without inviting all of the criticism about "You're messing up our canon" and "You're screwing this up" and "Why didn't we know this before?" And then having all of these things that we had to untangle later. So I wish they hadn't done it.

SUE:

I think you're absolutely right.

MAHOGANY:

I've been leaning towards that as well. You know like, I've liked Discovery for what it was in season one. And then kind of mixing in this whole Enterprise and TOS stuff. I'm just thinking "Why are you doing this?"

SUE:

Yeah I mean, they absolutely could have pulled off this season without the inclusion of the Enterprise, or Pike, or Spock. And if they needed another ship it could have been *another ship*. They could have had a totally different captain we've never met before come and commandeer the Discovery. Absolutely. For having them make this decision, I think they did it just about as well as they possibly could have. I really enjoyed Anson Mount. I was much more skeptical about Spock, because he is a character that we knew so much about already. That we had you know 50 years with essentially. But I think they also like walked a really fine line when they showed Pike his future with the time crystal. Because we've talked before on Women At Warp about how both The Cage and The Menagerie are pretty damn ablest. And they showed Pike this future where he is using a wheelchair, where he does not have the ability to speak.

JARRAH:

And his flesh is like, melting off his face.

SUE:

Yeah, that's also weird.

JARRAH:

It was intense.

SUE:

laughs But he has this reaction to it that can be read as you know “Death before disability” because he screams and backs away from it. But then we see him, you know, almost like talk himself down. And I thought the way they played it was really interesting. And I’m wondering if- what everybody thinks about the job they did portraying that eventual quote “end of the story” from Pike.

KENNA:

Oh, I hated it so that.*all laugh* I had a couple of reasons and I’ll try to keep it brief. I really wish that they hadn’t shown us that. I felt as though they were torturing that character for our entertainment. Part of the reason that I feel that way is because I think where we are in the story when that happens Pike is already sort of faced the knowledge that he’s probably going to die and it’s probably not going to be in a very nice way. So for him to then be that horrified at that particular vision, I don’t find it believable. I think the shock is believable. I don’t think the believing that it’s actually going to happen was believable to me. So it wasn’t a huge moment. And I felt like because we know that’s really going to happen, I just felt like it was abusing him for our entertainment which I *really* didn’t like. I wish they had gone a different way with that, to me personally.

JARRAH:

Yeah. It wasn’t as bad as I thought it could have been, given what you know the previous discussions we’ve had, and definitely take a listen to our episode on disability and ableism in Star Trek to talk about why you know the “beep-boo-beep” wheelchair thing is not so cool. But because it didn’t, you know, have that whole narrative of you know “It’s basically better to be dead than to be in a wheelchair” or at least “To live your life in an illusion created by aliens that are sort of holding you captive and probing your every thought than to live in a wheelchair.” I thought that it didn’t- It was- it was *OK*. But I also- I think that Veena in this iteration was actually worse and less complicated than in the cage. So unless people were all going back and watching *The Menagerie* or *The Cage*, like Veena I thought came across as like, she’s already- she’s basically again someone who is living this illusion and *at first* she can’t get off the planet, but then later like she *could* get off the planet but she chooses to stay rather than to live being an older woman with a deformity. And I mean, of course like those are real types of emotions, and feelings, and thoughts that people have. But it’s challenging in a Star Trek universe where we’re supposed to be giving people hope and more like discussions of acceptance, and I feel like it didn’t totally counter the- I feel like *Discovery*, the learning disability thing was very positive. But in terms of physical disabilities, we’ve had some people in wheelchairs in the background, but largely they’re extras who don’t even have character names and the actors are often uncredited and I don’t think that really goes far enough.

KENNA:

I’m pretty sure it was just that one guy,

JARRAH:

Yeah. He was playing-

KENNA:

"Did guys see? We have a wheelchair. Check this out."

SUE:

He's been on screen *several* times.

KENNA:

OK. I'm just remembering there was one scene where it was very, I felt, like they were going "Hey check it out we've got a wheelchair. And also some other stuff is going on" and I- just felt very in your face like, *tokenism* a little bit? But I could be wrong. I haven't done a full-on analysis of the season for that.

JARRAH:

No, he's been in a few times. But I agree that it doesn't- it is not yet elevated to more than tokenism until at least you give the character a name *laughs* and maybe a line or two.

MAHOGANY:

I also see it as tokenism as well, because think about it. In a war you'd have people with different injuries or people missing legs and arms and stuff it wouldn't necessarily be just one guy in a wheelchair. They could have done so much more.

JARRAH:

Yeah. I did like Detmers thing, where she's writing the letter and talking about to the person she was talking, about how they made her see that you know who she is is more important than what she's lost, or you know how she's different and cool. Like I thought that was a good line, and I just think there's still some more work to do.

SUE:

Well, we've also had both Detmer and Ariam, this season we learned more about their pasts. So it is heavily implied that they both were augmented after an accident or an injury. And it got me thinking about whether this was a choice for them. Whether like they chose to have an augmentation rather than to not, or if this is just standard medical practice at this point in the future.

KENNA:

It's an interesting question. It speaks to the mentality of how they view disability after a tragedy.

JARRAH:

Interesting. Well I was actually going to say like, "How about we talk about Airiam and some of the other regular characters?" And we may not look it to everyone, but Airiams one I want to

particularly check in on, as well as Tilly, and Michael, and “Culmets.” But we'll see what we get to do. So let's start with Airiam if that's okay. There is- I mean, basically one big feature episode and a lot of foreshadowing. Kenna did you have thoughts on the Airiam situation?

KENNA:

Yeah, Airiam was so underserved and it was a real- I can only blame the sort of crossover between the writing staff- the showrunner staff sorry, because the way that her story ended for Discovery was so powerful to me. And it was so- like the emotion was just not quite deserved, because they gave us less than an hour to get to know her *and* kill her off. And you know there were so many opportunities that she could have been involved in the group talk, or she was- I didn't know she was human before that episode. I thought she was like, you know, like- not like Data. But I just figured she came from a race of people that were just straight up augmented like Borg or something. I didn't realize- nobody had any idea that she was a human woman who had had a tragic accident and, you know, basically living her life in a totally augmented body. And then it was over. That makes me really sad. And I wish they'd gone **sighs** well it's over now isn't it? **all laugh** Because it was really interesting, and her motivations and- god it broke my heart- halfway through that episode when she asked Tilly to stand next to her because she knew what was happening at that point and she couldn't tell anybody. She physically couldn't tell anybody, and the whole rest of the episode she was trapped. And it just broke my heart. That whole episode. But we didn't get anything else from her except that one episode.

SUE:

Is it underserved or is she underserved because of the way Discovery is written? Where it's not standalone stories? Because we've had this before with Sito Jaxa in Lower Decks. Where we got to know her, loved her, and then lost her all in one episode.

KENNA:

The thing is she was so- Airiam was so pivotal, and this wasn't a story about Airiam. This was an incredibly pivotal episode for the entire season of Discovery. The reason I feel like she is underserved, is because she had- those moments where she is trying to get to- where she has basically been infiltrated by future control and she's trying to get back to control. It's like hugely important for the story and she's a throwaway character effectively. We could have built that up. She should have been involved in every episode at a deep level from the beginning, and it would have made that whole impact feel much more like resonant.

JARRAH:

You mean the glowing red eyes weren't a deep level? **all laugh** Mahogany, what are your- do your thoughts on Airiam?

MAHOGANY:

Yeah, I agree that she wasn't fleshed out. And I mean, she was in this since the beginning, since Season 1 essentially. So I feel like this has given us *some* background on her as she went along, because as- I forget was it Sue or Kenna who said that she didn't even know she was human? I thought the same thing. I thought she was just some alien race or something. So. Yeah. They definitely could've fleshed her out, you know, showed more. Even the flashbacks where she had, where you saw that she was part of the group and everything. We had no inclination of that. There was nothing, and then all of a sudden they did this huge episode on her, and then boom she's dead. That's it. That's my thoughts on that. *laughs* You know, like I said before everything in this season is just too rushed.

JARRAH:

But yeah I mean, I see Sue's point too. I was trying to think about like Airiam versus Yar, *laughs* someone else like we also say was very underserved, leading up to her *first* death. And it's true that like Star Trek being more episodic, I think, had more leeway to do that, because you expected to get to know and have to be interested in guest star in a single episode. But I think I think there could have been more advanced planning to sort of seed in that thing. But as it was, I really only felt moved by it at the beginning of the next episode when they had her memorial. And that's because I cared about all the other characters feeling sad.

MAHOGANY:

OK see, that's why I'm not resonating with all of you because I don't have any *laughs* I don't know. When I watch stuff I don't really get that emotional feeling. I'm just like, it's hard to describe.

KENNA:

It's not just you, I had a hard time connecting with all of the characters really in Discovery. And I'd say that improves by the end. But there definitely isn't the character that I feel represents me or that I in some way identify with. I've never been able to connect that way.

JARRAH:

Well, Mahogany that is probably a good segue to talk about Michael Burnham.

MAHOGANY:

Yeah, that's the one I'm connected with. *laughs*

JARRAH:

Yes, you are. You're like an amazing award-winning Michael Burnham cosplayer. *laughs* And I know that in season one you felt particularly connected to that character. Can you tell us maybe a bit more about that and whether that stayed the same in season two?

MAHOGANY:

I feel like it did in season two just because I kind of- Let's say even though I'm not a big fan of the whole bringing the Enterprise and all that in, *because* I was so invested in Burnham and I

felt such a connection. I pretty much forced myself *laughs* to stick with this and watch it all. So I still feel that in a sense.

JARRAH:

What is it about the character that you think speaks to you?

MAHOGANY:

Well aside from the striking resemblance? *Jarrah laughs* Probably just her mannerisms and the way she interacts. What spoke to me a lot in Season 1 was a whole, you know, outsider thing. Because my background is kind of like that too. I was not raised by a Vulcan father but I did have like, that whole sort of kind of cold and distant upbringing. So to see a character who is like that on TV, it really spoke to me, and I felt like I had actually had some representation after 32 years never seeing anyone like that. And also being a black character who is just existing and doing her thing and nobody mentions her race. That's another point that I think is great.

JARRAH:

Yeah definitely. I want to throw a question out there to whoever has thoughts on this. Which is, a critique that I've seen several times this season was about the bit of the change that we saw in Michael's character, in terms of her emotionality. And particularly if you watch the first four seasons of season one where you know she's almost, you know, Georgiou is having to sort of coach her to be more cheerful, and then you know she's going to her first party, and all that kind of stuff after being very Vulcan-like. That in Season two she's very openly emotional frequently, and I wonder if anyone has any thoughts on that?

MAHOGANY:

OK. So my thoughts on this were, yes it's good to see her growing emotionally. But my critique is why she always crying? There are many more emotions in humans than, you know, sadness and anger. And I feel like that's what we were seeing most of the time. She's sad or scared and crying, or angry and beating the crap out of somebody. So you know I feel like there could have been like some range, where they show her a little bit of happiness or different- just different feelings you know? So I know it's kind of like mirroring Spock almost, because he had that whole rage issue where he's like "I like feeling emotions!" then he throws a chessboard.*all laugh* And then the next couple episodes later you see Michael wailing on this bag and punching Leland in the face, which is cool. I would do that.

JARRAH:

I may have yelled *enthusiastic* "Kick him in the balls!" *all laugh*

SUE:

What I picked up on, is that they kept telling us that Michael blames herself for everything. She blames herself for the Klingon war. She blames herself for Spock. She blames herself for

whatever. And I don't remember that overwhelming guilt being a part of Season 1 Burnham's character.

MAHOGANY:

I feel like it was there, but it wasn't front and center. She still had that you know "I have to pay for my crime" kind of guilt feeling, but now it's since she's pretty much been reinstated, the guilt is redirected to Spock and everyone else and everything else happening. That's the way I'm seeing it.

JARRAH:

Yeah. What about you Kenna?

KENNA:

Burnham's a complicated character for me. I like the fact that she's evolved beyond the sort of the Vulcan teaching. I think she had a lot of trauma that happened to her in the last season, that makes it believable that she sort of ultra emotional this time around. But she's able to still see the value of logic. So I appreciate that. I don't know how to phrase this in a nice way. She's like Marcia Brady of Star Trek. *Sue laughs* Like everything is about- like literally Airiam says "It's all about Michael." *Everything's* about Michael.

MAHOGANY:

Of course it is. It's all about Michael. *all laugh*

KENNA:

That bothered me a little bit. She's really petulant. She interrupts her captain, she does whatever she wants to. I don't personally like that part of it. I'd like to see her a *little bit* more restrained. But I do find it *believable*. I think her character is cohesive, if that makes sense. It's just I'm not sure that I'd go out drinking with her that's all.

JARRAH:

laughs Well yeah. I mean I have mixed feelings about it. Because on the one hand, you know, I think back to when Star Trek Voyager first aired and this like intense fear they had about making Captain Janeway too emotional, because she was the first woman captain and you couldn't go that road without people thinking that made her weak. And I like that you can have a protagonist that can be an emotional woman, and a woman of color that people are not like- despite all the criticisms that some people have out there on the Internet, I haven't seen "She's not strong enough." And this idea that like you can be a fully realized complex character that does have a range of emotions I think it's powerful. And I also agree with you, that she's been through a lot that it can explain this. And I also think Sonequa Martin-Green does an incredible job selling all those scenes. I would say like my favorite moment of the season would be her scenes with Saru in An Obol for Charon. Yeah. So I mean, I think there were some really really great moments where it really worked. And then there were some times, like maybe the Tyler scenes that I didn't buy it so much.

MAHOGANY:

Ugh! They keep pushing that relationship down our throats. So-

KENNA:

I love their relationship. *Jarrah laughs* I do, I love it. Well to be fair, I like Shazad Latif because he was on Spooks in the UK when I was actually living there. So I've seen him before. So I like him. Maybe it's just I want it to work because I want to see more of him.*laughs*

MAHOGANY:

Yeah that's that's how I wasn't season one with Lorca.*all laugh*

KENNA:

Yeah but I actually like- I like their interaction. It's believable for me. And I can tell they have good chemistry on screen, so it works.

SUE:

I feel like it exists in Season 2 though, so that we can see L'rell hurting. I'm not saying they don't have good chemistry. I think they do, but I think there's no reason for it to be there. If not, so we have the added layer of drama.

KENNA:

A love triangle.

SUE:

L'rell still being in love with Voq, but Voq not really being Voq. Or Voq.

JARRAH:

I did really like the last episodes with L'rell and Tyler. I think that worked. I think the first episode where they're on Kronos was very weird and painful in some ways. But I'm not a big Tyler fan. And I'm glad that he- at least when he's in the section 31 uniform you can like- I feel like you can get away with the greasy hair and like beard situation. But it just looked weird to me when he was in the disco uniform, and I don't know. So before we leave L'rell and Tyler, I just wanted to say that folks have not taken a listen to our Mary Chieffo interview, you should definitely do that. Because I think that she has some really interesting insights on what happened between L'rell and Voq/Tyler in season one, that is important to the discussion that we had of that season. As well as her insights on what motivates her as a character this season, being a woman chancellor in a Klingon patriarchy. And I think that that is super interesting. But, if folks are okay with it we should I think move on to Stamets and Culber, being another big problem that at least the Women At Warp folks had some issues with last season. With Culber being killed off. And I know there were some other folks that felt the same. Feeling, maybe I don't know misled? Or at least just very hurt, that you know there is this beacon of hope in the first openly gay crew members who are an interracial couple on Discovery, and then having one of them killed off kind

of unceremoniously and having to see that sort of pain and trauma. How do you think that the decision went this season to re- what is the word I'm looking for?

KENNA:
Bring him back?

MAHOGANY:
Reintroduce him?

KENNA:
Reintroduce is a good word.

SUE:
Reincarnate? Resurrect?

JARRAH:
Thank you. Let's talk about the *resurrection* of Culber. *all laugh*

SUE:
Oh, it's so complicated.

KENNA:
It's difficult for me because I- the episode where they brought him back I absolutely hated. There's still a very large part of me that hates the fact that they brought him back. But I want to preface that by saying that I am glad that he's back, and I like what they did with him with the rest of the season. I hated that they killed him off. I hated more that they brought him back. But again like I've said before, once they committed to making that extremely poor decision I think that they did a good job of them handling the consequences of that action. So I'm on the fence. On the whole, I'm glad the things are working out in the end, and I'm looking forward to their relationship going forward. But I feel like the whole- the last season and a half has been just basically one giant reset button for them trying to forget that they ever killed him in the first place. *unhappy noises of agreement*

SUE:
Yeah. From the *instant* they killed him, because I was at the After Trek taping of that episode, from the instant they killed him they told us that they would be bringing him back. So you know what- what does that even say to us as an audience? Basically you know death is not permanent for anybody.

MAHOGANY:
Except for Lorca *laughs* anyways.

SUE:

Well maybe, maybe not. But for all we know like prime Lorca is in a prison somewhere in the mirror universe you know? But I felt the way that they brought Culber back to us was 100 percent predictable, from the instant they told us he was coming back. And I've seen a lot of people saying different things, and how everybody reads it is gonna be different because the queer community is by no means a monolith. And some people have been like "Well this is showing us that you know queer relationships can work through pain" and others are saying you know "This is still upsetting because this only ever comes to pain and ends in breakup or ends in death." And it's just so *convoluted* in this story. Yet we do continue to see how much these two characters care for each other. And I think the most positive thing we have about it is the- what we have said when we're talking about Reno, is that nobody ever addresses it like "Oh wait you're married to a man?" Like it's not something that anyone's surprised by. It's not anything they question, *except* for Georgieu. I'm just going in all kinds **all laugh** of directions.

JARRAH:

Yeah. No and Georgieu was something that I was like "We need to talk about her too!" There's so much we could talk about!

SUE:

And **laughs** so when they do have that conversation they, both characters, both Culber and Stamets both just sort of reiterate like "No but- we're gay. We're not- we're not not gay. We're definitely gay." **laughs**

KENNA:

I love that scene.

MAHOGANY:

"In my universe everybody was pansexual" or something like **laughs**

SUE:

Yeah. I think it was funny. I think taken at face value, that it is just kind of a fun scene. But it also does continue to reinforce that bisexuality and pansexuality are only in the mirror universe?

MAHOGANY:

Now you mentioned it, I was thinking about that too. You know. As a bisexual person it's like "Yeah, another way we're getting pushed aside again" or yeah.

SUE:

Well and just, you know, the mirror universe being associated with bad morals or evil pretty much means you know that we're putting pansexuality and bisexuality in a box of bad intentions.

KENNA:

That's really interesting, because I didn't read it that way. I kind of read it as the opposite way. I kind of read it as it was poking fun at straight people who are like "Wait, are you sure you're not

straight?" *Sue laughs* So I kind of read it in a very different way. But now that you mention it you're absolutely right. It does sort of subconsciously reinforce the notion that, you know, because the mirror universe is full of bad people who wear mustaches, right? And they're all the panssexuals that are hidden over there, in the mirror universe.

SUE:

With all the *villainous* people.

KENNA:

Yeah. It's funny because I didn't read it by the beginning, but yeah.

JARRAH:

I would say like I'm by and large with Kenna on this one, that I think I wanted him to come back. I wasn't- I couldn't really buy into the way it happened and that episode didn't do it for me. But I think given that that decision was made that the way that they handled the scenes throughout the rest of the season were very very heart wrenching but well done.

SUE:

I just want there- the drama involving these two characters in Season 3 and forward not to be relationship drama. Just let them have a happy relationship and tell me a story that they're involved in.

JARRAH:

Yeah yeah. We also- I believe I saw a quote from I think I want to say Kurtzman, but I might be wrong. So if I'm wrong I will correct it in the show notes. But saying that basically by the end of the season we would see that it was necessary for Culber to die, that there was going to be something explained and I don't think that any of that was.

MAHOGANY:

Nothing was explained.

JARRAH:

I expected there to be a Red Angel tie-in. That didn't happen. I'm not sure it would have been better or worse. But anyway, just a comment. But I have a question about Mirror Georgiou. Because by the end of the season I'm like "Damn she is one of my favorite characters" and I feel weird about that? *Sue laughs* And I know when they announced they were gonna do a Section 31 spinoff earlier this season a lot of people said basically this is antithetical to what Star Trek is, to have a character that's helmed by like a fundamentally evil, or evil person or an anti-hero. How how do folks feel about that?

MAHOGANY:

Yeah, I really liked her character development. Because even though she was from the Mirror Universe and supposed to be evil and all that, I find she was one of the funniest characters in this season. Just with her aside comments you know? And she's always wisecracking and- something about Papi there, like it's stuff like that. *laughs* Right? So I feel like they gave- made her more like she's becoming more accustomed to the Prime universe in behaving in that sense. If that makes any sense. But yeah.

SUE:

They also showed that she has a good heart, as cliché as that phrase is.

JARRAH:

Yeah. What about you Kenna?

KENNA:

Yeah that's kind of similar to what I was saying. I'm not an expert on the Mirror universe, I'm not convinced that Mirror Georgiou is evil. I think she's ambitious, and powerful, and has done extremely well in getting to the top of the Terran Empire, which requires a level of sort of violence and cut throat-ness. And I kind of am looking forward to seeing how she fares in the Prime universe. Whether she will still have that, I mean because certainly at the beginning of this season of Discovery she was extremely ambitious and was like "I'm gonna roll you guys again." I think by the end she's softened on that. But that's also because she's battled some bigger villains and she has also formed some relationships that she probably wouldn't have had the opportunity to do in the mirror universe. And I wonder if now that she's had that opportunity whether she is no longer like "I'm gonna rule everything and kill everyone" and she's just like "Actually it's not a bad place to live."

JARRAH:

Yeah well, she's still suggesting genocide in the second to last episode. *all laugh*

KENNA:

Old habits die hard.*laughs*

JARRAH:

And you know, like she enjoys witnessing Leland suffering, I think for more than the fact that he's caused other suffering. But because she just didn't like him and she wants to overleap him. So I wouldn't- I also agree that she can't be like tagged as 100 percent evil. But I think it does raise questions about "Is this" you know "is it-" I mean I certainly would say it's a departure for Star Trek to be like "Yeah, maybe we can empathize with someone who's promoting genocide on a regular basis." but I am kind of into it, and I mean I'm really into Michelle Yeoh, and I think that this season she's just been really kick-ass, literally and figuratively.

SUE:

Now she was on Discovery when it went through the wormhole?

KENNA:

Yes, she stayed with it.

SUE:

So how is she going to lead a Section 31 series?

KENNA:

In the future.

SUE:

laughs all by herself?

MAHOGANY:

Maybe she goes back, who knows.

JARRAH:

Yeah. She finds a time Crystal, steals the suit, goes back, it's all good.

KENNA:

It could be in that time, because there is a period of time, it's not a huge period of time, but between the end of season one of Discovery and the beginning of season two. So you know- I mean what is it a year?

MAHOGANY:

It's about like nine months, they said.

KENNA:

Yeah yeah. So you know, even though it's a small amount of time, there is time there to be telling stories. So there is a possibility they could do that. I'd be ok with it being in the future. Certainly, we know she's going to be on Discovery Season 3 because said she was.

JARRAH:

Yes. Cool. OK. Well on that, we're coming up to, you know, needing to wrap up the discussion. But I know we could go on. One person we did not talk about of our general faves is Tilly, I would say cause I think she didn't get a lot to do after those first few episodes? And there were certainly some episodes where I felt her absence was conspicuously noted. Yeah. She did get to hang out with Po again. That was kind of cute. Any further thoughts on Tilly?

SUE:

I feel like she had a lot to do at the start of the season, so being more in the background was not as big of an issue for me for the back half of the season. I was a little, I don't know- I guess I'll say I *took notice* of the fact that more of the characters were pointing out her talkative-ness.

And I don't know what we're supposed to take from that. Was that just supposed to be humor? Are we supposed to think that, you know, Saru and Pike are actually annoyed by her at this point? Because if even our own characters on the ship are annoyed, are you just annoying your audience with it? So I think they need to find a little bit more of a balance with that for her.

JARRAH:

OK. Does anyone have any favorite or least favorite moments you want to throw out there that we haven't discussed already?

MAHOGANY:

Yeah, I would say Saru's evolution. You know like when he went through vahar'ai and he was on that the Ba'ul ship or whatnot, and yeah just to see how what is- he realizes he could be strong and just you see his character changed so much. It's like that was nice to see you know? Something different.

SUE:

Oh, I kind of hate that. *laughs* I've said it a few times on different shows but I really identified with Saru and- just because I deal with generalized anxiety disorder. And that was- Saru is the character I felt best portrayed that in any Star Trek. Because my best option before that was like Barclay. And this transformation, this biological transformation in this character causes him to not experience that at all anymore. And it just felt easy? Just too easy, to take that struggle away from that character. And he has said that, you know, he still has a heightened awareness of what goes on around him but they haven't really shown that to us. So yeah.

JARRAH:

I mean Doug Jones gave an interview where he talked about how he hoped that this would be a *hopeful* story for people with anxiety, which I also deal with. Yeah but I can totally see what you're saying, and I mean certainly like this idea like "You can just take a pill and then automatically goes away" is very simplistic. You just cut off your threat ganglia. But I think I loved that episode and I really love Siranna, and I actually- I think like, you know, the idea of her- the transformation she makes is an even shorter period of time. Like "Oh, you're piloting a Ba'ul craft" by the end of it. I really loved her, and I thought that the actress portraying her did a really great job.

SUE:

I'll clarify, I really *liked* the Kelpian episodes. I just like, my own personal connection to that character, I'm like "Oh OK. That's not there anymore." *laughs*

JARRAH:

But I don't think it was also uniformly portrayed as a good thing, which I think was a neat thing that they did. Because then they have him, you know, he almost has not enough fear. And he's

being a little bit inappropriate and possibly a bit reckless. And I think that it was that was a neat aspect that they put in as well.

KENNA:

It was hard for me to pick out a moment actually. I gave some thought to this- actually all of the moments- this is kind of on a meta level and also in the story, was really the Airiam episode, I can't remember the name of it.

JARRAH:

Project Daedalus?

KENNA:

Yes. That's the one. One of my common problems with the series, as it was running was, that they were very heavy on exposition in the first several episodes. Which seemed like everybody was constantly stopping to explain things. And the Project Daedalus was the first one where we got a lot of subtext that was not explained. And it heightens the action and I think that actually helped set the scene for later episodes. So the example was like, I love the scene between Airiam and Nhan where Airiam kind of looks at her and it's like "So those things help you breathe" and then she kind of like walks out. And it's like- that's really creepy. And then the moment I mentioned earlier about where she asks Tilly to stand beside her. Like if you were following that character you realize what's going on. But it's a very understated moment, and that episode, to me, marked the turning point for the whole season. So that's probably- that would probably be mine. We saw after that a lot of one on one little character moments between, you know, two characters that I think really provided some good color and helped me invest a little bit more towards the end.

JARRAH:

Okay. So I have a final question, which is basically what do you expect in Season 3? And what would you hope to happen? Are we going to see them evoke Voyager or Deep Space Nine? Are they going to be totally alone in the universe? What do you think we're going to see in season 3? And I'll start with Mahogany.

MAHOGANY:

I really don't know what to expect, or what we're going to see in season 3 just because this is, you know, the whole future jump business. It's kind of uncharted territory. So I guess I'll just take it as it comes, and see what happens.

JARRAH:

Anything you would wish to see?

MAHOGANY:

Really? You have to ask me that? You know what I wish to see. *laughs*

JARRAH:

chanting Lorca! Lorca! Lorca!

MAHOGANY:

Exactly. He could come back somehow-

JARRAH:

Back and then *forward*. Yes sure. I mean really, we saw a guy raised back to life through the power of mushrooms this season.

MAHOGANY:

Yeah. Maybe he's in some mushrooms somewhere.

JARRAH:

How about you Kenna?

KENNA:

First of all I was like, because I saw this potentially coming a couple episodes before, and I would say 50/50 on whether they were going to you know have the Trek nuggets to *do it*. *all laugh* Because I thought "This is a huge huge risk for the writers." I am so excited for them to be in the future. I'm so excited for them to be so divorced from anything that we know as canon. And I think that the writing team has a lot of potential to do some really good stories and go back to exploring. And that, to me, is incredibly hopeful. I think- I suspect that the federation will still be around. I hope they don't go down the post-apocalyptic, the V'draysh Calypso thing. I'm not clear on exactly the timelines there. But I am very optimistic and I hope we get to see exploration. I don't think they'll in any way try to get back because they all of them know that to take Discovery back to the past would be disastrous. So I think we're going to boldly go into the future.

JARRAH:

And Sue?

SUE:

I think this was a really smart way to go so far into the future without having the writers have to create new technology. Because that is, they've said it a few times in interviews and things, that the problem with going so far forward is that you have to come up with the technology that seems plausible but is still advanced for where we are now. And now they don't have to do that.

JARRAH:

And allows for a conflict. Because like, you know, is the technology too advanced that then you can solve any problems.

SUE:

Right. So I think that's a really smart way to do that. Yeah. I'm also curious as to exactly how this lines up with Calypso. I was just trying to see if I could find the timeline and it is not coming to me easily. *laughs* But at least we have a more straight line to that short than we did before.

JARRAH:

All right. Any final thoughts, things that you didn't get to talk about, that you think we missed that were important? And I'll start with Kenna.

KENNA:

No, I just- so this was a really emotional journey for me as a person who hosts a podcast this season. Because it was- I felt it was very divided. And I know even on Priority One we had Anthony absolutely loved Discovery, and me and Elijah had some issues with it. It's what I kind of am wondering, and it's an open question which we probably will not answer. I wonder if the first two seasons of Discovery are going to end up being like the first two seasons of Deep Space Nine, because everybody that you ask if you've never watched deep space nine they're like "Just fast forward to season three." *laughs* So I know it's a- we've had a lot of discussions over whether this was Star Trek or not or whether this was good for the franchise or not. But I think in 10 years time, 20 years time we will have all forgotten about it and it will just be another great franchise.

JARRAH:

Sue.

SUE:

I think Kenna raises a really great point, because I think sometimes we Star Trek fans forget the divisiveness that surrounded *any* of the spinoffs when they started. You know I remember being on the internet when DS9 started and seeing people say terrible things about it. You know, you can read in old fanzines what people were saying when Next Generation started.

JARRAH:

Even some the original series actors.*laughs*

SUE:

Yeah. I think that we're in you know part of the Trek cycle of that. But yeah, and that in however many years time it's not going to matter. And you know, some people will like one of the series more than others and some people will like other ones. So it's all where your own particular interests fall.

JARRAH:

All right well let us conclude then. I'm going to go around and ask people to tell us you know where people can find you elsewhere on the Internet or if you have anything else you'd like to plug. So I'll start with Mahogany. If people would like to get in touch with you is there a place they can do that? Or is there anything else people should know about you?

MAHOGANY:

Oh yeah so they can reach me- I have a cosplay page. It's on Facebook. It's Mahogany Sevearia. That's as S E V E R I A. And I'm also on Instagram as the, so T H E. Severia

JARRAH:

And Kenna?

KENNA:

So the best place to find me is on priorityonepodcast.com. So we have a show every week. And you can email us at incoming@Priorityonepodcast.com. I'm really not on social media very much anymore so that's probably the best place to get in touch with me if you would like to reach out to me.

JARRAH:

Awesome. And Sue?

SUE:

You can find me on Twitter [@spaltor](https://twitter.com/spaltor). That's S P A L T O R.

JARRAH:

And I'm Jarrah and you can find me [@JARRAH-Penguin](https://twitter.com/JARRAH-Penguin). And also I forgot to mention, Mahogany I and I will be on a panel on Sunday May 12th of Ottawa Comicon about the evolution of women's roles in Star Trek. So if you're around Ottawa hit us up. If you'd like to get in touch with our show there are several ways you can do that. You can e-mail crew@WomenatWarp.com. You can find us on Facebook, Instagram, or on Twitter [@womenatwarp](https://twitter.com/womenatwarp). And for more from The Roddenberry podcast network, visit podcasts.Roddenberry.com. Thanks so much for listening.

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