

Women at Warp Episode 115: Behind the Lens with Hanelle Culpepper

SUE:

Hi and 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 is Sue and thanks for tuning in. With me today is my lovely co-host Jarrah.

JARRAH:

Hello.

SUE:

Before we get into today's main topic, as usual, 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 can do so for as little as one dollar per month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media, to silly watchalong commentaries. And now even some extra non-Trek content in the feed at certain levels. So if you'd like to join us at any level every little bit helps. You can do so at Patreon.com/WomenAtWarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.

JARRAH:

Before we get into our main topic, which is an awesome interview that Sue did with Hanelle Culpepper who is one of the Star Trek's few women directors, and she will be the first black woman to- well she's the first *woman* to direct a pilot of a Star Trek series. And she was the first black woman to direct Star Trek, I believe. So I'm excited for that, but of course a couple of little pieces of news and announcements from our show and from the Roddenberry Podcast Network. First, if you haven't yet I suggest that you take a look on your podcast feed for Daily Star Trek News, the newest podcast from our network which is hosted by Allison Pitt. And it gives you just a super quick look into all things happening in the world of Star Trek these days which is a lot. I also follow her on Instagram on this account, and every day you know new quotes and interviews. You know, what are people saying about Tarantino's Star Trek? or the new animated series? Series's? Series is? *laughs* So you should give that a check out. Another thing that Roddenberry Foundation is working on is a fundraiser with Heroic Curriculum, which is a nonprofit that was started by Chase Masterson.

SUE:

Chase's Foundation, the Pop Culture Hero Coalition, is working with Scott Palm who created this Heroic Curriculum. And it is specifically for young people with disabilities and their peers to create more inclusive spaces. And there is currently a fundraiser happening to get that curriculum into schools this fall. And currently, all summer long, the Roddenberry foundation is donation matching dollar for dollar for any donations that come in through the Gofundme page. And the easiest way to find that is to actually go to the Mission Log Facebook page, and it will be their pinned post, to find a link to that Gofundme. Or if you go directly to Gofundme you can search for Heroic Curriculum and that should come right up.

JARRAH:

Last but not least, it's a mere month- or month and a bit away from Star Trek Las Vegas and we are very excited. Both you and I, Sue, as well as Grace are going to be there along with other representatives from the Roddenberry podcast family. So we're very excited. There's going to be a network panel, as well as Women At Warp panel has been approved. So stay tuned on our social media feeds and in our next episode we'll hopefully be able to tell you more about the specific topics, times, and dates.

SUE:

Yeah. And we plan, like last year, we plan to have more stickers to give out as well as some other things at the Roddenberry booth. So come on by and say hello. And we're also trying to get on the calendar a meetup for the entire Roddenberry Podcast Network. So that all of your hosts will be in one place that is not the Roddenberry monolith. But somewhere that includes wonderful beverages so that we can all hang out and socialize a little bit, one of the days of the con.

JARRAH:

Awesome. All right. Well, so did you want to introduce our main topic then?

SUE:

Yes. So I'm so thrilled I had the opportunity to talk with Hanelle Culpepper, as Jarrah brought up. If you follow the show on social media you may have noticed that this year for International Women's Day we decided to highlight the women who have directed episodes of Star Trek and this podcast is right along those lines. So as you probably are aware in the first 50 years of the Star Trek franchise with more than 700 episodes there were only six women directors: Gabrielle Beaumont, Gates McFadden, Kim Freedman, Nancy Malone, Roxanne Dawson, and Allison Leddy. With Discovery Season 1 Lee Rose became the seventh woman to direct an episode of Star Trek and Hanelle Culpepper became the eighth woman, and the first black woman to direct an episode of Star Trek. Since then, we have also had Marta Cunningham join the ranks directing in Season 2 of Discovery bringing the total to nine women who have directed Star Trek in fifty-two years. So *laughs*.

JARRAH:

strained We're getting there. But kudos to these women who have managed to get that opportunity to carve out that space in a period of time that even still, as a Star Trek is moving forward on representation, and Discovery is definitely accelerated the pace of diversity in representation behind the scenes. There's still some pretty significant structural barriers in Hollywood for women directors and other behind the scenes professionals. And during the interview I believe I do say to Hanelle that she's the first woman of color to direct, that is inaccurate as Roxanne Dawson is Latinx, but I want to correct that here in that she would be the *second* woman of color to direct for Star Trek. But she is definitely the first woman to launch a Star Trek series, as she just wrapped up directing actually the first episode of Star Trek Picard

premiering at the end of the year. So obviously CBS wouldn't let us talk much about that. But she did share a little bit about her feelings about the cast and crew.

JARRAH:

That's so exciting!

SUE:

In addition to that we chat about her background, her education, the different mentoring opportunities, the different programs that she went through, how she got into Star Trek, the kinds of projects she picks. All sorts of different things in this interview. So I hope you find it enjoyable.

Transitional console beeping

SUE:

So Hanelle, thank you so much for joining me today to talk some Star Trek and some other stuff.

HANELLE:

So happy to be here!

SUE:

And so let's start at the beginning. I mean, according to Wikipedia your undergraduate degree is in Economics and French. How did you get into the TV and film industry?

HANELLE:

Yes well, I wanted to be a director from my senior year of high school but I was thinking of doing advertising. So I went to Lake Forest College near Chicago. I had this completely wrong idea that I would get a job at an advertising agency and direct their commercials. So the reason why- look ,you know what you want to do you should get a mentor who is in the business to truly guide you on the correct ways to do things. So I went to Lake Forest College and I was majoring in Business in order to get into advertising. And my first Economics class was so wonderful, I loved it. So I switched my major to Economics and I want to go do a semester in Paris. So that's why I ended up double majoring in Economics and French. And I did very well in it, but I got a scholarship to get a PHD in economics from University of California Riverside. And while I was in that program I was like "Wait a minute what happened? I wanted to do TV and film and I've gotten on a completely different path." And I dropped out of the program and transferred to USC. And, you know, kind of went on to pursue the ultimate goal. So that's kind of how- that's kind of why there's the anomaly of Economics and French *Sue laughs* in my background. *laughs*

SUE:

And is it correct that you originally were interested in acting not directing?

HANELLE:

Yes. Yes. Like most of my growing up life I wanted to be an actor and I think that's just because as a kid that's what you know. What you see, like you don't see the directors you see the actors. So in high school, I kept auditioning to get into plays and I was never ever selected. And so by senior year I took this directing elective. And I only took it because you have to act in another person's play, so it's my way of guaranteeing myself an acting role *Sue laughs* and that's where I got the directing bug and also realized that I really did not like acting. I prefer to be on the other side of the camera.

SUE:

Awesome. So after that, you were selected for the American Film Institute's Directing Workshop for Women. Can you talk about that experience?

HANELLE:

Sure. When you say after that it makes it feel like it was-

SUE:

Immediate, yeah.*laughs*

HANELLE:

Yeah, it was many years *laughs* in between. It was- yeah waaay after that. But yeah, that was an incredible program. What was great about it is that it's not for people who are just out of film school, or who are just kind of break into the industry. It's for women who work in the industry for at least five years. And at the time that I did it, it was for women who really have always wanted to direct, and maybe have never tried, it's changed a little bit now in that you are required to have directed at least one thing. When I applied I had directed my first short. So you could do it- I think as long you hadn't directed a feature you are eligible to apply. And so it's great because it gives you a chance, especially for the women who haven't done that at all, because even though you have to- now that you're required to direct something it doesn't have to be a major production. You can just even go out with your iPhone and shoot something quickly to apply for the program. So it really gives you a chance to sit in that director's seat, to really embrace it, and own it, and learn from it, and make mistakes in a very supportive environment. And it's great. Some women go through the program and decide they don't want to be directors, and some go through it and feel inspired, and some go through it and feel like "Yes, I kind of know- I do know what I'm doing." And it gets a little bit- it gets solidified, the skills and stuff that you've been learning. For someone like me who learns most of it through working on projects and in various positions. You know, PA, I think I've done every position except for being a gaffer. So it's a great way to kind of solidify your experiences, and yes through that program I made my second short film A Single Vote, which went on to do really good things for me and helped get my first feature.

SUE:

And before your first feature you worked on several short films and independent films. Is that right?

HANELLE:

Yes, that's right. So I did my first short, *The Wedding Dress*, for the AFI program. And I did *A Single Rose* for the AFI program, and then my producing partner and I had this idea for a spoof of *Sex In The City* called *Six And The City* with six year olds on the playground. *Sue laughs* And once they announced they were ending the show I'm like "Oh my goodness, we have to do this right now!" So we hurried up and made it. And so I've actually had *A Single Rose* which is this kind of luscious period drama playing on the festival circuit at the same time as *Six And The City* which was this, you know, a comedy with kids. And I went on and did- I did I think another two or three more shorts and a bunch of other PSAs. But it was really like the combination of *those two* playing the festival circuit at the same time that kind of led to the breaks, because *A single Rose* got me into the Berlin Talent Campus, and through that I met Rebecca Sonnenshine. I opted her script *Within*. Together we changed it because it was a period piece, so I knew I couldn't afford that, and made it present day. And then through all my work with a group called Filmmakers Alliance, I had a great relationship with Jacques and Liam and they liked the script. They took it to Bigfoot which was the company they had a relationship with that was looking to greenlight genre stuff. And so they greenlit it. And their question is "Why should Hanalle direct it?" And in addition to it being "Well, I control the property so you can't have a- do it without me." It was, you know, they were able to look at *A Single Rose* and they were able to look at *Six and the City* and see that "OK she can work with kids" because the stars of *Within* are two 9-year-old and "She can make you know something that's really beautiful." And so that's why they allowed- to let me direct the feature.

SUE:

That's fantastic. So that versatility in the short films was really an asset?

HANELLE:

Right.

HANELLE:

So then how did you get from work in film into television?

HANELLE:

Yes. Lifetime ended up optioning *Within* in an earlier channel for some years. And it did well and they really really liked it. So they introduced me to these producers who were doing another lifetime thriller and needed a director. And I went on to do three different features with those producers, and basically I had then had enough material in my reel to craft a reel for television. And I got into NBC's diversity program and interestingly I was picked up to shadow on *Parenthood* and they gave me a shot. Now in the *meantime* that they gave me a shot they offered me an episode. In the meantime through all these years I had also shadowed on twelve different shows. I did a lot of shadowing independently and so that was a show that I had shadowed on already twice. And so I was able to let them know that NBC was giving me a shot,

and they were able to take that back to the CW and say "If NBC is giving her shots then let's give her a shot" and that led to me getting 90210. So it was that I had the material that I could've crafted to *pause* be the way it needed to be. That's one thing that I always urge people to do. But if you can create a reel that can work for a drama job, or one that can work for a thriller job, or one that can work for you know a family-friendly job. You know, try to find the things in your reel that will make it work for those various things, instead of having just one reel that goes out. That makes people see you one way. Of course don't do this if you actually hate working on thrillers *laughs* and don't go after thriller jobs. But I think that was one thing that was very helpful. And then the other thing is, just going into the meetings, people when you've done features they're nervous that you can actually handle a television schedule and a television budget. And so I came from a feature world where these were all low budget features and we still had major visual effects, some major stars, and we had no time. So I was always able to really emphasize that in meetings that "No, I've done projects that have had you know little budget and no time. I'm used to working fast and trying to get something that still looks cinematic." That's another thing I encourage when people trying to make the switch from the feature world to the TV world, that you really emphasize that you can work within the schedule on the budget. And also that you emphasize that you're a collaborator, because sometimes people get nervous with feature directors, that you're used to being the king of the kingdom and you're used to everything going your way and whatever you want goes, and the TV that's not the case.

SUE:

Is there- you know I'm not from the production world. Is there interaction between directors of multiple episodes on a TV show?

HANELLE:

Very little. So basically when you're shooting there's another director prepping, and at some point you do try to meet up, and talk, and compare notes, and stuff. Or you can call a director that's been on the show already and if you- like if I get a job I may call the director that I know who's done it and ask him or her what's the scoop. But otherwise, there's not. Like, you're so busy in your edit, and ones busy in the edit, one is busy shooting, one is busy prepping, that there's not a lot of time to interact unless you really make an effort to go out and have drinks or dinner one night. The only exception would be when this happened a couple of times where my episode may end right where the other one picks up, or we share a set. So like with Star Trek Discovery we both shared a set in the next episode on Essof IV. And so when we're designing this set with what we need, then we're talking to each other to make sure that things fit both of our needs.

SUE:

So then when you're coming on to a show for the first time, it's really up to you to do the research to make sure you're getting the right feel and the right visual effect- the tone for the show?

HANELLE:

Yes and I would say that that's something that every director does. And so I am finding out there's actually a lot of directors who don't, and I find that completely completely shocking. That you would walk onto the set of- walk into your first day of prep and not know anything about your show. But yes, I try to watch as many episodes as I can to really become more in sync, you know, more on gut decisions on what's the right thing to do. And anything that happens any- you know you can have a million ways of doing one thing, *laughs* but the only way to get it kind of entrenched in my head, that "What's the way of this show?" is to watch as much as I can. And if it's a show that doesn't have anything or if I'm with them later in the season, and the new episodes haven't aired, then I'll try to read the script to fill in the blanks between whatever was the last thing on the air and my episode. If it's a completely new show I ask the showrunner to give me a list of movies or shows that they feel tonally is what they're going for, and the look is what they're going for.

SUE:

Are there certain shows or films that you watch to get inspiration? Or does that vary based on whatever project you're working on at the time?

HANELLE:

For me, that often varies, especially in the features. As far as features of inspiration it really varies or when I'm working on and what I feel matches the tone or look that I'm kind of going for. And then I can share that with the DP. With TV I am forever inspired by Handmaid's Tale, and Killing Eve, and I've just been watching Sorry For Your Loss. And it's excellent as well. Those are a few of my favorites. Mr. Robot. But again, it really depends on the project because the style of the framing of Mr. Robot is not right for *any* story. *laughs*

SUE:

When you're considering projects or something, or going out for a project, what is it that draws you to that? Is it the story or characters?

HANELLE:

TV, film, or either one?

SUE:

Either? Both?

HANELLE:

With TV we're kind of really evaluating each project in the lens of if it will help with the ultimate career goal. And so we've been really focusing on more caliber projects. Whether they be on network streaming, or premium cable and so that's part of the determining factor. I have kids, so part of it is if I'm going to be away from home for this project is it one that I really love and

believe in? You know basically, I'm in a phase of not taking jobs for a paycheck? At least not right now. Maybe in a couple years *laughs* although it's really trying to pick the shows that I feel are somehow going to help me with my craft, or are leading to other goals. And then other than that, you know, with features, of course, I'm reading it and it's like "OK do I love these characters? Is this story one I want to tell?" It's going to take up a year and a half, two years of your life, it's going to take away from better-paying TV jobs. So I have to really love the story and I also have to feel like I need to read it and visually start to be inspired just by the writing on the page of how I want to do this. And if I don't feel inspired by it then I pass on it.

SUE:

So then how did you get involved with Star Trek?

HANELLE:

With Star Trek the director Olatunde knew my work from I think Sleepy Hollow. I met him once in Atlanta when I was prepping and he was shooting. This goes back to you asking "How much do the directors interact with each other?" So I met him then, and we were in apartments right above each other. So I actually saw him a couple of times getting ready for- well going to work. And he just- he really liked what I did and so he called my agent and wanted to see if I was available to do it. It was Star Trek, because I had loved it since I was a kid. Well, I guess not really a *kid* kid. I loved it since the Next Generation. So a little bit older than a kid but still very young. And so I'd just jump at the chance to do a Star Trek. That was a no-brainer. I didn't even read the script or anything. *all laugh*

SUE:

Well at the time that your first episode aired, and you know, in over 50 years of Star Trek you were just the eighth woman and the very first woman of color to direct an episode of Star Trek. Were you aware of that at the time and like what are your thoughts on that over Trek's 50-year history?

HANELLE:

I was not aware of it at the time. I was not aware of it until Trek.fm was interviewing me for their podcast, and they brought it up, and then I went and tried to look that up and see what was true, and I was absolutely surprised by it. And my thoughts on it is that, I know how this industry was and how it works. And you know it's easier to give jobs to people who the producers knew and who they worked with before. And I think that it doesn't- I can't speak for the heads of the people who are hiring over those 50 years, but mostly I don't think it's a conscious choice. It just kind of happens as you go through and give the same groups of people the same list of directors are proposed to you every year. Or the people you know who've done a good job before, so you know you can trust them with that, and the next thing you know 50 years have gone by. So I have to say though I'm just very impressed with Star Trek and how they are making a very very conscious effort to diversify both in front of the lense and behind the lens. And when you think about at least when you think about Star Trek behind the- I mean in front of the lens it was

always diverse, which is why I don't think it was a conscious choice to not be diverse behind the lense.

SUE:

It seems like not just Star Trek but a lot of television right now especially genre television is really trying to do a better job with diversity throughout. Is there anything else that you think that Star Trek and other shows can or should do to address this kind of imbalance behind the scenes or do you think that they're there on the right track at this point?

HANELLE:

I feel like Star Trek is on the right track, and as long as they continue to make the effort- I feel like it's also a matter of realizing that there is a lot of talented women and people of color out there. And if we can get- if you can meet these people they'll impress you, and you'll want to hire them as well. And so the more that the people in charge of, not just Star Trek but any show, at least take the meetings and meet these people. I think that we'll find this diversity increases more and more, both behind and in the front of the scenes. But I do think that Star Trek has been doing a really good job and I applaud them for that. And you know you can always just keep doing what you're doing and keep hiring women, keep hiring people of color, keep looking at roles and not see them as one way, you know where they could be anything. And it's great. I love the time that we're in. A lot of women directors that I know, who've been working working so hard at it for years, are finally getting their break. And then they go right on and continue to make- get more and more jobs. And that- to me a sign that it's not just that people are giving them a chance, but that these women and these people of color deserved it in the first place because they do a great job and they get hired back and they get brought on the other projects. And it's a wonderful time now, and I hope that it stays that way, and that people realize that it's not that anyone's losing a job. I think it's just that kind of the cream of the crop is filtering through.*laughs*

SUE:

Well, you mentioned earlier about the shooting schedule on TV and we've heard a lot about that from Star Trek actors over the years, about how tight the schedule is and how long the days are. What is it like for you as a director from the time you start working on an episode until you're done with editing?

HANELLE:

Well, Discovery has a 10-day prep and 10-day shoot schedule, so you jump in and you're right into it working with your storyboard artist and figuring things out. I mean, fortunately, a lot of the sets are made- though I don't know, it could be like in season 3 you know, they jump forward *laughs* to the future. I guess that means a lot of new sets, except for Discovery itself. But you know you really are trying- and if you do have new sets then they usually have the virtual reality being set up, so you can start doing your blocking of things like that. You really gotta have to just jump right into it. There are a lot of things that need lead time, props to be built, costumes to be made. We don't have any time to mess around, and that's kind of the case with most TV.

Most TV you get in and it's either a seven or eight-day prep and then a seven, eight, sometimes nine, ten-day shoot. And you also have location. One thing with Star Trek is a lot of the episodes did not have location. We did have some in my last one, and some last season. They probably had more than usual. Yes. Like you really need to be ready to start jumping in the van. Finding a location. Figure out what works. And the sooner you can lock in locations the better, because then we can go back and really blossom. Obviously you want to find a location that works and that's right, the sooner you can make that decision the better for everybody. And so it's just fast fast fast. But here's the interesting thing about Star Trek is, you know I've done shows that move super quickly, like Shooter, and then there's Star Trek which moves quickly and certainly much faster than a feature but it's slower than other shows. So I remember one day my first season of Star Trek, we had two scenes that day and they're both two handers. Two handers mean that they're just two actors. And we had twelve hours allotted to shoot them. And it was like "Surely we can beat this! Like this should take me six and a half hours or so." 'cause usually a two hander scene you can knock out in two hours *laughs* two-and-a-half hours or even in and out, some shows an hour and a half. But it actually took twelve hours and so that was kind of a learning thing for me to see how, especially when you have these new gigantic sets and the time to light them and everything. So Star Trek can move a little slower than some shows. *laughs* But it still moves. It moves quickly though.

SUE:

Is there a reason that it took so long? Was it the makeup, or the CGI, or anything playing into that? Or is it just the way that the show is done?

HANELLE:

I think it's a combination of the way it's shot, the style of it, and the lighting. These are brand new- these brand new sets that, you know, that are really *really* big sets. And that's why. If it had been a set that we'd been on before, then I'm sure we could have shot it more quickly.

SUE:

So then what's it like when you're working with so many CGI elements?

HANELLE:

Let's put it this way, I wouldn't say I *love* working with all the CGI elements. *Sue laughs* I really prefer when an actor can interact with an actor, and not- I mean just thinking about my other shows too, not interact with a tennis ball or you know or act to nothing in the case that they have to do in their acting to themselves. Those setups where they have to act to no one there and to look at what they did. There are challenges to everything you know? Also making sure people- the more that this stuff is pre-visualized so that everyone knows what it's going to look like, where it's going to be, how tall, and all that stuff. The easier it is for everybody, and so part of your prep is to get as many of those elements as close to what they're gonna be, or as close to their pre-visual version as they can get. But you can tell the actors these things, and lead their imaginations in the right way. And so it gets a little exhausting *laughs* sometimes. But then it's also like very very cool when you see everything put together, and it works, and it looks great.

And I was just at Cine-gear yesterday, and there was a film called Ni- Ninea I think it is? Which I hadn't heard of but I guess It caused a little bit of a stir, and because they basically shot the whole movie in their apartment. And there's a ton of visual effects. So many visual effects that you wouldn't even know that they were visual effects. And they talk about how the actor walked in there, they were like "What the heck have I gotten myself into?" And you look at this, it's a 30-minute short film, a feature and it's amazing. And again it's because like as much as you can know ahead of time that this is what it's going to be and you can share that, the better it just all is in the long run. And it was a cool short, for anyone to check out or just get it out there, and something that is the majority of is visual effects and you can't even tell. Sorry *laughs* I got sidetracked here.

SUE:

No not at all. When you're working with that, when you're talking about the pre-visualization, how much control do you have over that? Like do you get to express what you want it to look like? Or are you just having to work with what is provided?

HANELLE:

It's kind of a combo platter. A thing with Star Trek I love it in all the pure visual effects sequences, you work with the storyboard artist and that gets given to the VFX team and they create it based on that. Some things are already in the works because these things take so long. So if there was a new ship, and it's probably been designed before you even come on board, so then you are you know given that element, and that you have to use that element. Sometimes there's time for some changes, especially as the story changes. I mean they need mainly to be changed to some elements and some elements have not been designed and they get designed as you are working with the VFX team and the storyboard artist. So really is a combination platter, but I do feel like Star Trek has been one of the best- whatever I storyboard I've seen come to life on the screen.

SUE:

So how is directing for Star Trek different from working on other genre shows? Like The CW superhero lineup, or Grimm, or even Sleepy Hollow?

HANELLE:

I think the only difference really is that there's a little bit more time, because though they are all done in the seven-day prep eight days shoot model. I think Gotham and The Flash extended a little bit to be nine day shoots, Gotham I think became a 10-day shoot at one point. But the prep is all the same. So that's one thing that's a little different and nice about it. Otherwise you come in and that's just the way of the TV world, and it's the same in any show. And whatever is different it's just the personalities who are behind them, and how collaborative they are, and what you're seeing when you're reading a script, and you feel like some things aren't making sense. Or if you come with ideas or what's better, people do you stuff different on different shows. But otherwise it's the same. You know, there's a lot of working with the VFX team ahead of time, figuring stuff out with your team ahead of time. The stunt coordinator ahead of time will

work out all these things. Gotham had a lot more locations, as does The Flash, instead of just being on set, because you're on Earth *laughs* or not on Earth but you know, they're in- well I actually know that we're going to- but you know what I mean. They're on the planet and not in space. So that's kind of that's different and that's liberating. It's nice to go on location a lot.

SUE:

So I have read that you're also a big Star Wars fan, and that is very welcome here. I'm just wondering why do you think that these science fiction franchises have lasted so long and continue to gain fans?

HANELLE:

I think that part of it is that they were so ground breaking when we first saw them, *laughs* and just really you know I- to me it's like the first time I saw The Matrix, and you just saw this- you were immersed in a completely new world, and you know, they had lead characters that you love and rooted for and stuck by you through movie after movie. I think it's that way of looking at our world, presenting it to us through a space lens that allows them to comment on our society in a way that is palatable to all. I think that's one reason why, and I think that there's the kid in us. I mean we all want to go into space. *all laugh* I really wonder if there is any one person out there who hasn't had that childhood dream of going into space. *laughs* And some get to do it to become astronauts. They're smart enough to do it. And then there's those of us who will never get our feet off the ground other than getting on an airplane. *Sue laughs* So I'm thinking that this fulfills that childhood fantasy part of us all, who is just fascinated with space and what's out there. And I almost wonder, until it's scientifically proven that there is no other life out there or it's scientifically proven that there is because they come to visit us or something, I think until that great mystery is solved that these type of movies, especially the ones that do a well like Star Trek or Star Wars have done well, will continue to be popular.

SUE:

So I have to say it. I know that you are directing the premiere episode of the New Picard series. I know you can't tell us any detail about it, but can you tell us anything about the experience on the set?

HANELLE:

I can say that it's been a wonderful wonderful experience, and that everybody is- I think everybody on this show is as excited as I am to be doing Picard. We all love- oh actually wait, I know there's one person who hasn't seen the next generation. *both laugh* But otherwise everybody else saw it, loved it, we're all like little kids running around. So you know it is not without its challenges, but it's been an excellent experience for me and hopefully for everyone else involved. And we're really proud of what we're creating. I think the audience is going to love it.

SUE:

We're very excited for it. *Hanelle laughs* So Hanelle, I want to thank you so much for your time today. If our listeners want to follow you on the Internet is there a good place to do that are you on Twitter, Instagram?

HANELLE:

Yes I'm on Twitter. I think I'm- yeah! I'm @Hillview798, that's my production company. So @H I L L V E I W 7 9 8. And then I'm on Instagram under my name, Hanelle Culpepper. And if it's ever hard to find, you can always go to my website which is HanelleCulpepper.com or Hillview798.com. And then I have a Facebook page that people can follow. If they find my Facebook personal page and they ask to be friends I can tell you now I will not accept it. *laughs* I only do the rule of "if I've met you in person then I'll let you be a friend on Facebook" But if they find the page- the actual fan page and they are welcome to follow me and a message me through that and everything.

SUE:

That is a very good rule. *both laugh* Hanelle, thank you so so much. I'm so happy we were able to do this today.

HANELLE:

Yeah. My pleasure, and thank you again for asking.

transition noise

JARRAH:

All right! That was really interesting Sue. I'm glad that we had the opportunity to chat with Hanelle and I am so excited to see what her work on Star Trek Picard is like.

SUE:

Yeah, I think we're all sort of on the edge of our seat waiting for- I think it's late December now is the premiere date that we have. And hopefully, we'll be able to chat with her again once the episodes have aired so we can actually *laughs* talk details about them.

JARRAH:

Absolutely. And just wanted to let listeners know that we are planning on doing an episode on Star Trek's women directors more broadly. As we mentioned, there are only a handful of them. And we want to highlight their work and their contributions to the series. And so that will be coming at a later date.

SUE:

Yep. And that does it for today's episode. If you'd like to reach out to the show you can do so on Twitter, or Facebook, or Instagram @WomenAtWarp. You can reach us by email at crew@WomenAtWarp.com. And for more from the Roddenberry podcast network visit podcasts.Roddenberry.com. Jarrah, where can people find you on the Internet?

JARRAH:

You can find me on Twitter @JarrahPenguin. That's J A R R A H Penguin or at Trekkiefeminist.com.

SUE:

And you can find me on Twitter @Spaltor. That's S P A L T O R and the first weekend of August you can find us both at the Rio in Las Vegas.

JARRAH:

Yes! See you there!

SUE:

And thanks so much for listening.