

Women at Warp Episode 120: STLV Interviews with Jacqueline Kim and Mike Johnson of IDW

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. You're gonna be surprised, but with me this week are Jarrah

JARRAH:

Hellooo

SUE:

And Grace.

GRACE:

mock confusion How did I get here?

SUE:

And we're coming at you with some more Star Trek Las Vegas content. But before 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 can do so for as little as one dollar per month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media, to silly watch along commentaries, to our newest spore jump category where you get podcast episodes about non-trek topics. To join us at any level please Visit www.patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. So what else is happening? Right now, we are a few days ahead of Dragon Con as this episode is released and, as I mentioned in the last episode, if you want to find me there check my schedule on the Women At Warp blog. There are 20 panels I have to do, so don't try and stop me in a hallway.

JARRAH:

Also at this point we're about a month out from our recording our Book Club episode so there's still time to grab the book and read it. It's called Dwellers in the Crucible and it's by Margaret Wander Bonano. And if you want to learn more about our book club, you can search Women At Warp on the goodreads.com page under "groups."

SUE:

All right, so then let's get into the additional Vegas content. And the first thing we have to bring you is an interview with Jacqueline Kim who played Demora Sulu in Star Trek Generations.

JARRAH:

You know this was a really cool experience. This was, Jacqueline Kim, only her second convention but Jacqueline was there having great conversations at her booth. And I think

beyond just what we had imagined talking about, which was largely about what it's like to play Demora Sulu, be in the fandom, and about her sort of, I guess, influences as a role model for Asian-American girls. Jacqueline Kim also had really interesting things to say about just science fiction more broadly as well as about her Reproductive Justice themed art.

GRACE:

It's good stuff.

transitional f/x

JARRAH:

Hi there. So if you're listening, Women At Warp are here at Star Trek Las Vegas. This is Jarrah, and I'm here with Grace and Sue and we are very excited to be interviewing the fabulous Jacqueline Kim, who played Demora Sulu in Star Trek Generations. Thanks so much for joining us.

JACQUELINE:

Oh my gosh. I'm super excited. Just to give people a sense of what it looks like, right now I'm behind my table at the convention, it's pretty crowded, and these three wonderful ladies are sitting behind my counter with me, and we're gonna do this!

JARRAH:

Amazing. So this is your first convention. Is that right?

JACQUELINE:

It's my second.

JARRAH:

So how's it been going for you so far? What's the experience been like?

JACQUELINE:

Well I actually have a really- the assistance of a great manager, and she's made the experience just way better than I've experienced before. I'm not great with crowds. I think I told you before the interview. *laughs* So it's- what's been really great about it is having the opportunity to have interface with people, and listen and hear about their lives. I've been hearing a lot about activism and just *pause* a lot of great thinkers. This morning I met a woman who works for the- she was in the military. She's a woman of color. She's Indian, and she actually joined the military so that other soldiers would see in her the face that they were seeing as the enemy. That was one of her missions. And yeah, she just does really cool work.

JARRAH:

That is really cool. I mean none of us are really great with crowds either. *laughs* So it's an experience for sure, and it's a bit of a balance. So I wanted to get started just really broadly

asking you about how it happened that you were cast as Demora Sulu and what that experience was like?

JACQUELINE:

So I had just gotten to Los Angeles in the mid 90s. I had had a theater career in Chicago, in New York, and Minneapolis and my agent just got me a bunch of auditions. Star Trek and Disclosure, the film by Michael Crichton. It's interesting a lot of the parts I've played have had to do with male female politics, which is going to tie in with one of my art pieces right now. And I remember I just- it's sort of like I trifecta. I got three jobs in a row and it was- Star Trek was one of them. I got to audition. It was a good audition. My sister was a big Trekkie growing up so I knew it meant something to her. But for me it was just like, learning how to be on film. And so yeah that's how I got it.

JARRAH:

Cool. And what was it like? Did you know this was going to be kind of a cultural phenomenon when you were a cast?

JACQUELINE:

Cultural phenomena meaning-?

JARRAH:

Like, did you know you were gonna be part of this big thing where like people were gonna know you from Star Trek, and just want to talk about the same role, and what that means is to be sort of part of this history of being like the daughter of Sulu?

JACQUELINE:

So no, I didn't. And I've been starting to read and understand recently, also because I co-wrote a feminist sci-fi piece in 2015. But I've been beginning to understand the significance of it and I'm pretty excited, now 25 years later. But when I went into it it was just more about doing the work, because I came from the theater and wanting to make sure that I did it well, and hoping that the part was substantial. But I will also add as a side note, I have always been a little bit afraid of becoming famous. Because as a woman, particularly a woman of color. That can limit your ability to move through the world. And that's really important to me, my freedom. Yeah.

JARRAH:

Yeah 100 percent. I think that's really valid, and it's unfortunate that our world is like that still, and especially for women and acting, and yeah absolutely understand.

JACQUELINE:

And I can add a couple of things to that now. I *am* opening up more now, because I see one's visibility can be a real great way to- like the things you pay attention to, the things you listen to, you can actually open doors and open ears to those things. And then I have also ways, I have really skillful people around me. Not a lot or anything, I'm a super independent operation. I don't

even have an agent and I'm rarely acting anymore. But, there's a way to use your visibility to point in directions and focuses that you find interesting.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Definitely. So I'd love to ask a little bit more about your feminist sci fi piece. Actually you know- I mean, we've all been fans of you since Generations and love- I mean just that one scene, I think that makes me smile more than anything else in the whole movie. And because I mean Star Trek, to that point, like the diversity has pushed the envelope for the time but I feel like it always could have done better. And just having more women of color I mean. There's like, in terms of Asian women like you have Keiko O'Brien. There really aren't a lot.

SUE:

Alyssa Ogawa.

JARRAH:

And yeah also Sue just chimed in with Alyssa Ogawa. But like, no principles. Oh, Georgiou now. So it's getting better, but it wasn't- and it's cool to see like, Sulu is such a meaningful character for a lot of people. Like that, he has a family carrying on, and that like you can sort of picture some of the traits of his character being carried forward in his daughter, in a woman. So it kind of challenges the idea that like all of those traits would be like a men's purview alone. If that makes sense.

SUE:

So we saw actually, in Star Trek Beyond in the alternate original series timeline, we finally see Hikaru Sulu's family, we see his partner and his little girl. And there was a huge I guess outcry, in a good way, like a celebration that we see a little Demora Sulu in Star Trek Beyond. And I was wondering if you had any thoughts on that, of this character in one film carrying through to what they're doing even now.

JACQUELINE:

I just heard about that, that I appeared as a daughter. I know that- I thought he had- I'd seen pictures of John. Okay so John Cho and I have a history, and I've directed him in a couple of plays, and we've known each other when we first came to L.A.. So it's kind of wonderful that he's playing *sort of* my dad? I guess it's an alternate universe right? Possibly. No, I'm just hearing about that and I think that's exciting. And I think as an Asian-American, because I think that there's sexism that's very strong still in the Asian culture. So I think for Asian-American women it can mean something pretty great. But I also think it's like- I was thinking today, Demora drives the ship. And I'm a really good driver. And I just want to put that out into the world. Like, this whole idea like women can't drive. I'm really good. Like, I live in L.A. and I park my car a lot and I judge like *laughs* I will literally be like I'll be like the announcer going "And that was a four point nine" or "that was a 5.0." *all laugh* Yeah. I'm really good driver, side note.

SUE:

So recently on our social media we shared an interview that you did with Sara Kuhn at Angry Asian Man. Also, amazing blog. And it was about what you meant to girls particularly, as like an Asian-American woman in space. But there was a lot of other stuff in there. And one thing that I just learned about from that interview was that this feminist sci fi that writing that you have done, and I'm wondering if you could talk a bit more about that.

JACQUELINE:

I don't know if you've heard of ITVS FutureStates. OK, So PBS created ITVS FutureStates to make what they called "Mini features", and they basically give filmmakers fifty thousand dollars to make an educational feature- a mini feature. So we made a short in 2013, Jennifer pong is the director and the writer. And I Co-wrote on that effort. That came out and it played the festivals got lots of awards and then we developed from that short we made a feature. We like, sort of made a Frankenstein of a feature. And I did a lot of the writing on the feature, and that was a labor of love. And that came out, let's see. We wrote, prepared, got money, made it in like 2013, finished all the effects and came out 2015. And we garnered a special jury prize at Sundance, which is pretty exciting for Jen and I, for collaboration. Which is pretty exciting. Which was really hard too, when I was working on the film. But the story is what's beautiful. It's about a mother who is aging out. She works in science and medical tech, and she's aging out of her role as a spokeswoman for a company. And In order for- she's a single mother, and in order for her daughter to make her way through society, we're just predicting that in the future it's going to require even more money. Her mother basically decides to go through the procedure that she's been selling her whole life, which is the singularity transference of consciousness. And sort of in the vein of Kurosawa, who is a huge inspiration for me, *pause* we're trying to make the film about- let the audience know what's going on with the main character, that she is going to be leaving her daughter but the daughter doesn't know. So the whole film is about a mother slowly like saying goodbye to her daughter while acting like everything's normal. And then the last fifth of the film you see the daughter with the clone of the mother, and this actress is fantastic. Her name is Freya Adams. Yeah. I'm happy to talk more about it if you want to know.

JARRAH:

I'm really curious about what drove you to create this piece and whether you think it relates in any way to Star Trek, I guess as a different type of science fiction?

JACQUELINE:

Well we were called Feminist sci-fi at Sundance, but I kept correcting them and saying it was domestic sci fi. Domestic meaning like both Jan and I, we have Asian mothers, and they came to this country with lots of strengths and great education but they sort of took a more domestic role because they married. *pause* I mean, they married and I don't know it just became very traditional. Maybe that happens when people immigrate. Connections between Advantageous [Transcribers note: the films title] and Star Trek. I mean, I think being a futurist is super super exciting. I'm kind of a closet architect. My father's an architect. My grandfather was a chemist.

And I'm always fascinated to know the way that people live now, and how that will imprint for the future, and how that's going to impact the future. And I think the thing in Advantageous that we captured is how much machines have infiltrated our lives already, and our consciousnesses. And how that's affecting our interaction with each other. And how as human beings it's like so important to get in there and still rally for live interaction, imperfection, mistakes, and struggles. Because we can do everything with our phones all day and almost never leave a screen, I think that our bodies are breaking down and therefore the development of our brains. Because our brains develop vis a vis our bodies interactions. So there's that connection. But also I think it's talking a lot about what's inherent in women. Which is like wanting to really spark life force, in their progeny but also in each other. And you know Viva *that* forever, like Women At Warp, *Sue laughs* like Viva that.

JARRAH:

That's probably a good segue into talking with some of your art. Grace was going to lead that part of it, Grace is an artist herself.

GRACE:

All right. Well to start off we've talked about representation, about having an audience, and about self-expression. So first off let's- could you tell us a little bit about this fetching shirt you have here that is very intriguing?

JACQUELINE:

Okay. Over the last four or five years I've been transitioning into becoming a multidisciplinary artist. I do sculpture and drawing, so the plastics on one side, I compose. But I also am moving into social practice. So a big part of that is advocacy for homeless youth, and another branch of it is these spicy T-shirts I'm making. So, when Trump was campaigning I literally saw in my head walking up to him and shaking his hand, with like men in suits around him, and him looking at my breasts, and seeing this phrase "You came from a vagina." And when I say it it's so *laughs* it releases me! Like it just makes me feel so comfortable. It's a universal truth. I mean not everybody had a vaginal birth, but nonetheless this is the gateway for all life. So *laughs* I've made these T-shirts on a residency that I just had recently, and I put them out into the world to women, men, families, newborns, I said sent one out to Singapore. And the message is getting out. And I'm calling it an *action piece* because I think that it depends on the wearer, the conversations he or she wants to have or doesn't. Who do they want to wear it with, who they feel comfortable with. I think it's- for me it's got kind of like a life of its own. And I'm selling them here at the Con and I gave one to Brent, I gave one to Garrett, I think soon they're going to give one to Kate. So I'm excited to spread that message.

GRACE:

I really like that idea, of just the act of wearing an article of clothing being an artistic interaction. And I thought that was really interesting in reference to you saying you were interested in becoming more multidisciplinary as an artist. Now you also mentioned part of that was sort of

trying to work socially and do output with your work. What do you have planned next? What are your goals and ambitions there?

JACQUELINE:

Thanks so much for this question and for the platform. So last year- I have a passion about making public space more conducive to people who don't have a home. And as we all know there's no such thing as the homeless anymore, it's our friends, it's people who are middle class and have jobs that are being laid off who can't afford to live in L.A.. So one of the interventions I did last year was, have you ever seen solar lanterns? Right. So there is a company called Lucy that makes these amazing solar lanterns and they're getting them to third world countries, and I think Los Angeles is beginning to feel a bit like a Third World country. And I got them to this particular organization in Los Angeles called Spy. And I got them out to homeless youth and I talked to them about it. So I have an article in Contango Journal, just the youth telling me how they use the lanterns, how useful it was. Just learning about how they're navigating their lives, because I don't think people realize homeless people are **pause** deteriorating day to day. I just hope, that the perspectives I'm gaining and the interactions I'm having with people I can somehow continue to translate that into communication that will then lead to more action, that will then lead to more communication. But that is a big overall goal. To just get with some really smart people, some good designers, and help people who are living in public space who cannot get housing right away. Just to make public space more conducive for them. Because It's an epidemic- I mean, I don't want to even brand it or package it as an epidemic because that's another way of making it an *other* problem. I think that we all sort of have to just **pause** deal with it in our lives, and take action about it.

GRACE:

And as a multidisciplinary artist, this is a very broad question but it's one that I love to ask people who work in a bunch of different fields, do you have a dream project? Do you have something that you've considered that if you had unlimited time and resources you would like to do?

JACQUELINE:

Yes. And I'm secretly doing it. So I have a band called This I Heard, and I've collaborated with people over the years. And I'm collaborating with someone right now, a composer in Dallas, and we're sending each other files back and forth. So we're just helping each other further our songs. But I want to write long long pieces- I don't want to say like symphonies, but If we live in a dream space, and that's the beauty of Star Trek. It's like limitless space and endless diversity or like, what is that called? Neuroscience. Whatever you pay attention to will actually occur. **noises of intrigue** I would just write music. I'm gonna just compose music. I'm sort of actually returning to all the things I loved to do when I was really little. Just like sing, move my body, and make creative work. Yeah.

GRACE:

And we were talking about how you are passionate about talking about- having the conversation about the homeless problem, in America and just in general, and how *pause* as a world that we see depicted in Star Trek. That's not a problem anymore. And there is this pathway that we have to take from the time we have currently now, to the time we want to see in the future. And you briefly, before we started interviewing, were touching on how you thought there was this very interesting co-collaboration between the communities of Star Trek and the scientists out there who make these things *actually* happen. What would you like to see happen next, you think? Is that too broad a question? *laughs*

JACQUELINE:

I mean, I am going to speak as a neophyte in general to most of the Star Trek franchises. I pretty much know TOS and I know aspects of Next Generation. I know little snippets here and there. *pause* I mean, the notion that homelessness is solved in the future is pretty interesting. I'm gonna kind of hang on to that for a second. So is it an economy-less future?

SUE:

It is a post-scarcity economy.

JACQUELINE:

OK. Can you just say that phrase again?

SUE:

It is a post scarcity economy.

JACQUELINE:

Okay, so that's a huge dream right? Imagine that just existing as a human being meant that- I mean, I don't want to get into communism. *all laugh* I don't want to. I'm not *against* communism but it's- I want to say.

GRACE:

inaudible audio

JACQUELINE:

I just love valuing *all* human life. And really hearing where people come from because the diversity amongst us is amazing. And probably with all the species around us that are becoming extinct, there are probably aspects of being human that are becoming extinct. So I don't know how much Star Trek kind of does that kind of- *pause* Is the human, not? Has the human lost its weight? It's value, its essence? In the future in Star Trek?

JARRAH:

We actually did a panel a bit about this yesterday, and I think what came- the idea is that if we're not fighting with each other over resources, you know either because certainly in our own

society there's ways things could be distributed better. Like things are distributed very unequally and- but also in the future if we had replicators people don't- aren't fighting for food. You could have food, and you don't need to be fighting for health care, that humanity's best traits can rise to the surface, and that we focus on bettering ourselves and the rest of humanity like by being scientists and artists and writers and counsellors and other things that give back to our world and to other people. Partly because we're not so focused on what divides us amongst ourselves by feeling like you know maybe like we're more entitled than *those* people to have a roof over our heads, or those types of attitudes.

JACQUELINE:

So, I think what's most important to me about Star Trek is that it makes one understand what a kind of fascinating thing you have in the life that you're living. And how much you are an architect of your experience. And if you really were empowered with that knowledge what would you do? I mean, the questions you guys are asking me- I'm sorry to call you "you guys" because you're not guys at all. The questions *my comrades* are asking me *all laugh* are great questions. It would be great if- I would love to curate conversations the way that you're doing, where you just ask. You just open up, lay out the carpet as it were, for someone to just say "what do you dream or what do you think is possible?" Because like when I was- I'm reading *The Physics of Star Trek* right now. And just understanding Hawking, and understanding Einstein, and understanding physics. How like from one point to one point across the circle is actually *not* the most direct route in a curved space. I mean just that notion just changes things. It makes you kind of not want to literalize your circumstance and see more deeply. I guess.

JARRAH:

That's really neat. And I think that not just Star Trek, but science fiction *and* science, they do inspire us to look at things differently. You know like, there'll be those big announcements about discovering new exo planets and things, and Star Trek talks about how, you know, realizing we're not- if we realize we're not alone in the universe that maybe that could be a catalyst for change for us to realize we're all in this together and we have to, you know, up our game and start treating each other more like, you know, fellow beings. So I think that's really cool.

JACQUELINE:

I mean how many galaxies now?

JARRAH:

Lots. *laughs*

JACQUELINE:

Billions of galaxies. So if you have this tiny little lifetime and you realize what it is, like that it is a speck on *pause* this huge landscape of billions of galaxies, then I think the most important thing you'd want to be is conscious that you have a life in your hands. Like, if you can have that every day you're really lucky. And if I can inspire that through my work or in my conversations I'd just be really happy.

JARRAH:

That's amazing. Do you have anything else you'd like to share with our audience?

JACQUELINE:

Well I'm looking at Zubin Mehta right here. He's one of the greatest conductors in the world and he is the husband of Nancy Kovak, who I believe it's her first con, and he's just he's rolling around in a wheelchair but he's actually going to be like conducting throughout Europe in a week or so. This is the capability of a Star Trek convention is that you can see giants, just strolling around rolling around beside you. And it's just a total pleasure to meet you. I hope to, you know, drop in in the future and check in. And I really look forward to listening to your podcast and all power to you. Oh! Let's see, if you want to check me out on Instagram just hashtag- on not hashtag, handle is @youcamefromavagina. And that will connect you to my studio, which is Visibilities, and my band is This I Heard. I'm on Facebook, stuff like that. Yeah.

JARRAH:

Awesome. And we will share the links to all your profiles in our show notes. Thanks so much again Jacqueline Kim.

Transition f/x

JARRAH:

And we're back!

GRACE:

Now for this next interview, I got to lead it up, with Mike Johnson who's a writer for The Star Trek comics at IDW publishing. And you can really hear me get suuuper stoked in the process of doing this interview. Mostly because I already love getting to do this show and talk about a thing I really love. But then talking about a thing I really love in a *medium I really love*? And then talking about a thing I love in a medium I love that's mashed up with another franchise that I *reeeeally love*? You can kind of hear me go off the deep end a couple times and it was great chatting with Mike. I hope I get to do it again in the future, and I hope you enjoy listening to it.

JARRAH:

You may be talking about the Transformers crossover, just a little bit?

GRACE:

sheepishly Maybe.

transition f/x

GRACE:

This is Grace coming to you from Star Trek Las Vegas, and we've got a very special guest from over the IDW booth. Would you like to introduce yourself?

MIKE:

Sure. Thank you. My name is Mike Johnson. I write Star Trek comics for IDW publishing and I'm so excited to be here! It's great.

GRACE:

Right. We've actually reviewed a few of your comics on both our website about the show and the blog. Are there any particular Star Trek projects that you've worked on that you're especially proud of and that you would like to put emphasis on?

MIKE:

Yeah. The most fun was we did a Star Trek Green Lantern crossover which was just crazy ridiculous like banging your action figures together when you're a kid. So that was probably the most crazy fun one. The one that probably means the most is we did a four issue mini series called The Legacy of Spock. Which actually was part of the ongoing Star Trek series, but it was like a four issue story and it was just kind of like a tribute and farewell to Leonard Nimoy after he passed and just celebrating Spock at different points in his life and that got a great response from readers and that one means the most.

GRACE:

That must have been really cathartic as a fan to work on. Did you feel any kind of pressure, that this was how you were going to represent this monumental figure in sci-fi, that you really wanted to get it right, was there pressure there?

MIKE:

Yeah, that's a great question. Yeah definitely. Definitely. You want to make sure that you're not only story wise that you're telling a story that's worthy of the character and the actor. But you want to make sure you get the voice right. And honestly like all of us who are Trek fans we have Nimoy and Spock and his voice in our heads, you know, and in our hearts. Like, we know what he sounds like. And so I was just listening to that voice as I was writing to hopefully do justice to it.

GRACE:

What's it like trying to get into all of those different characters heads and getting that voice in your head, when you're representing characters that have been written across this huge gamut of media and then you're doing your little take on them, how does that feel? How do you go through that process?

MIKE:

Well I used to do a little bit of acting in high school and college, and it's really a lot of it I think when you're writing license work is you're kind of doing- imitations sounds like a harsher word than I mean. But you're you're sort of imitating the actors, you're putting on their persona. So you know writing the Kelvin universe comics I would just, you know I've seen the movie so many times, but I would just try to capture the- even though it's not an audio in the comic, it's the sort

of cadence of their words. And you know how they would convey certain ideas. So it was very- it's really fun. It's kind of like "OK now I'm in you know Zachary Quintos voice, and now I'm in Chris Pines Kirk voice." So it's a lot of fun. It's more like sort of play acting. Yeah.

GRACE:

I've known multiple writers who sort of talk to themselves in their characters voices when they're trying to keep track of a lot of personalities at once. Do you ever find yourself doing that?

MIKE:

Yeah absolutely. Yeah, I absolutely talk out loud. That's why you have to be careful like if you go to a coffee shop to work. And you're like *Spock voice* "No captain, that would not be logical." So yeah, when I'm at home though I will definitely like talk-out the dialogue.

GRACE:

Now we touched earlier on you doing the crossover comic with Star Trek and Green Lantern. Is it rough to be mashing up properties like that? To be working across multiple universes that you know everyone's going to have opinions on and everyone has strong feelings on? I for one was a big fan of Star Trek and Transformers mashed up together. That was fun. So yeah tell us how it is to mash things together like that. To *get to* put your action figures together in the sandbox.

MIKE:

Yeah. The absolute most important thing is that you have two companies who own the franchises who are invested and want it to happen. It's not just like a cynical cash grab or something, but that they want to have fun too. So they let you play with, you know, because both as you alluded to, like both Star Trek and Green Lantern and have not only massive mythologies and lore going back decades but they're *very* passionate fan bases right? And there's definitely a Venn diagram of Star Trek fans and Green Lantern fans, but there's also people outside the you know outside the Venn diagram that have never read the other franchise, and it's like why are you putting peanut butter in my chocolate and vice versa. So I think the important thing is just to make sure- what I did was I made a list of the characters that I wanted to use, that I thought had the most opportunity to bounce off each other. Right? Like starting with of course you got to have this sort of alpha males of Jim Kirk and Hal Jordan banging into each other, but also like having fun, like poking fun at that alpha maleness. You know? It's just so ridiculous. And then you know just again taking advantage of how rich the mythologies are. And I gotta say like just thanks to CBS and to DC Comics who let me sort of run with stuff, and it ended up being a lot of fun, and we got 12 issues out of it which was great.

GRACE:

Now again going back to the mash ups, is there like a dream mash up you have to work on at this point? That you would, given the chance, do in an absolute heartbeat, that you would consider your masterpiece?

MIKE:

Oh, my masterpiece. Oh man, that is a real- I'll tell you the one I would never do is Star Trek Star Wars. I'm *never* going to. It's I know like you know "Can the Millennium Falcon blow up the Enterprise?" It's interesting when you- you know, I've worked on so many Star Trek things. I'm a huge Star Wars fan. Like I'm a Star Wars baby, and I don't believe that you have to choose one or the other but-

GRACE:

We can all be Star friends!

MIKE:

We can all be Star friends! Exactly. And I sort of need something that I can just be a fan about right? I geek out over Star Wars as much as anyone. And I just wouldn't want to cross those streams right. Something I would like to work on- there was an idea for a Star Trek Alien crossover, which I think would be really cool. But I believe my friends the Tipton brothers, great Star Trek writers, they were in line to do that. So I don't want to steal it from them, but if they *didn't* want to do it, that's the one I would want to do. Like more of a creepy horror sci-fi vibe with Star Trek.

GRACE:

I would love to see that. Also stepping away from Star Trek for a minute, we see a lot of property crossovers with IDW these days and we see some really good ones. Is there one outside of Star Trek that you'd ever be interested in doing or would like to try doing. I do know that you guys try and keep it by franchise separated together but just as a thought.

MIKE:

That is a great question. I would have to think. No, no! There are- so this wouldn't be Star Trek these would be two other things? Yeah. Turtles would be fun. And *pause* I'm trying to think of the licenses they have. You know I love how popular My Little Pony has become. And like, I'm like a 70s 80s kid so I was there when My Little Pony first came out. And I'm like this little boy and I'm like "Oh it's the girl stuff." I just think it'd be awesome to like, get into that world and learn about it and write it now. Another crazy mythology and going and being like "I'm sorry everybody, I will never know as much as you do. But it looks like a lot of fun to do." So like, My Little Pony Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Yeah.

GRACE:

Now we touched really briefly on you saying that you consider yourself kind of a Star Wars baby. Can you tell us a little bit about your personal relationship with Star Trek and what that means to you and what you're trying to represent?

MIKE:

Yeah so I was probably even a Star Trek fan before I was Star Wars, because I was four years old and Star Wars came out. So it was the first movie I saw in a theater. But *before that* I'd been playing with the old Mego huge Star Trek figures. You know the ones I'm talking about?

GRACE:

The ones with the rubber bands!

MIKE:

The ones with the rubber bands, and like the bright blue phasers, and the cloth uniforms, and those were my favorite toys. And I didn't- I was too young, because I'm like three four, to know what they meant. But I knew that like Spock had the ears and Kirk was that yellow.

GRACE:

You got to make your own little mythology there.

MIKE:

Yeah, well said! Yeah exactly. So and then you know, I'd watch TOS the original series and then I was 14 when TNG premiered, which is like *perfect* right? And it was like *my* Star Trek, you know? And obviously I was like 9 years old when Wrath of Khan came out, which was like the greatest movie ever. So yeah, that's sort of my origins with Trek, and it's paralleled my Star Trek love. And you know- sorry my *Star Wars* love. You know, people forget the Great Star Wars drought in the 90s when there was just like- episode one was *never* gonna happen, and we'd been thinking about Episode nine since we were little kids, and it was like "That's never going to happen. We got three movies" and that was gonna be it. So during that time Star Trek kept that kind of space franchise thing going. So I think they're very symbiotic actually.

GRACE:

Like do the fandoms need to have an enemy to fight up against? *laughs* Yeah, there's definitely a need to be the alpha male in terms of fandom as well some ways. It's a little weird. But what kind of stories do you think it's important to represent with Star Trek? What do you think is the kind of story *worth telling* specifically *with* Star Trek?

MIKE:

That is- that's the number one question. It's a great question. I think- you know I was walking around the convention today, and I love it so much because it's such a cross section of humanity. It's so diverse, so inclusive, it's so optimistic and I think all those things are absolutely integral to what Star Trek is and you want to have- so that's one element of it you want to reflect hope and optimism. You know Star Trek is us, and Star Wars is aliens in a galaxy a long time ago, and Star Trek is our dream of our future. And it's inspiring scientists today. So you want your Star Trek stories to reflect what's going on in a way that the TOS stories started, telling social parables essentially. Right? So I think that's always critical to just- that's something that makes Star Trek Star Trek. And just yeah that feeling of diversity, and it's kind of ironic that a

franchise that's known for its diversity still started with the white captain right? The white male captain right? Because like that was the time.

GRACE:

The representation was only as good as the medium it was in.

MIKE:

Exactly right? But at the same time they put Uhura on the bridge, and they put Sulu on the bridge at, you know, at a critical time in American history. And, you know, in that sense Star Trek was so groundbreaking, and I think never losing that sense of what the franchise can do it's really important.

GRACE:

That's a wonderful answer, I got to say. So I know you probably can't talk about a lot of them, but we do know you've got some upcoming projects down the pipeline. Is there anything you can tell us about them, and give our listeners just a little hint of things to come?

MIKE:

Yeah sure. So if the podcast gets interrupted it's because I got tackled by CBS people.

GRACE:

mock terror Oh god here they come! Ahh!

MIKE:

Here they come. Oh my God with bat'leths! With that let's see. I'm scared, yeah. So what can I say? So in August we are launching a three issue Discovery series called Aftermath, that takes place after Season 2. We can't touch season three of discovery. We can't go into the future with the ship. So we're staying behind after the ship leaves, and we're seeing how the events of season two affected Captain Pike and Spock, and my favorite character in the new show L'rell. Chancellor L'rell is my favorite character. It's incredible. So it's an opportunity to tell more L'rell, more Pike, and more Spock as he's dealing with Burnham's departure after they like reunited. Suddenly she's gone. And then it was really fun to write kind of a Pike L'rell back and forth where they're trying to form a bit of more of an alliance. But of course they're they're both representing two opposed empires essentially. So that's Aftermath. That's three issues starting in August. And then in November we're starting our Picard mini series called Countdown to the show. Three issues. *pause* And what can I say? I can tell you that it is set between the end of Star Trek Nemesis and the first pilot episode of the show. And it tells the story of the event where Picard first meets a couple of characters that you're gonna meet in the show. So we're gonna introduce them in the comic, and you'll meet them in the show. Other than that I can't spoil anything but.

GRACE:

That must be really cool if we get to kind of be the person to introduce these characters then, before the show's even out.

MIKE:

Yeah it's great. It's one of the benefits of working with Kirsten Beyer, who's co-writing the series with me, and it's really Kirsten's story. Kirsten was one of the creators of the show itself, it really came out of her idea to do it. And the story is straight from her. It's like, "Here's a part of Picard's history that we can tell in the comic because we don't have time to do it in the show." So you know to be working so closely with her is the best.

GRACE:

And what's it like kind of trying to capture a character who is iconic, definitely without question? Like when you're writing Spock, how is that different from trying to encapsulate a character like Picard?

MIKE:

Yeah it's intimidating. *laughs* I'm nervous about it. I have to leave the convention, and go home, and sit in front of my laptop, and like not freak out. And it gets back to a little bit the play acting. I've written a couple of Picard scenes. We had a little scene with him and Q in one of the comics, and then in the Spock story we talked about earlier we had a flashback to when Spock and Picard were on Romulus together. So I got a little bit of a Picard- *to passing fan* Oh thank you so much! Yeah, it was a blast to write and so I have a little bit of Picard under my belt. I think I'd be really freaked out if I'd never written in his voice. But *pause* it's gonna be a challenge, but I've got my little Picard facepalm bust on my desk, so- actually I probably shouldn't have that because it makes it look like he's disappointed with what I'm writing. He's judging me! So I'm going to have to find like a happy Picard "Engage" bust here somewhere.

GRACE:

There's an old tv guide for sale that he looks really happy on the cover of? Yeah. Getting back into a broad question again, but what do you think we need to see more of in Star Trek stories in the future to keep going in the direction we've been going of an optimistic future and its portrayal?

MIKE:

I think more people who are differently abled I think is important. And again getting back to the diversity theme of Star Trek and just seeing more of that cross-section of humanity, and reflecting who we are today but in the future. That's probably my biggest thing is to see how, you know, explorations of that. Star Trek has always explored what it means to be human and, you know, using alien races as mirrors against which to view our own prejudices and things like that. So to net, I guess my biggest thing is to never lose a bit of the, not a bit of, but never lose that kind of social awareness that is just quintessentially Star Trek.

GRACE:

Now we actually have a couple of- at least a few listeners who aren't that into comics but are into Star Trek, if you can believe it or not. Are there any major Star Trek comics or pieces of the Star Trek history that's in them that you think that is essential for them to check out?

MIKE:

Yeah. There's a great series right now called Star Trek: Year 5 which is basically like the lost season of the original series, written by my pals Jackson Lanzing and Collin Kelly and a great talented group of writers and that just came out from IDW. I think people who maybe haven't read a lot of comics would really enjoy that series. Comics by Scott and David Tipton who have done a ton of Star Trek comics for IDW. They've done work across lots of different versions of Trek. They have a great Mirror Universe story with the Next Generation that's great. My stuff is mostly the new movies, so if you like the new movies you might like the comics I've worked on. And I would just say don't be afraid to like visit your local comic shop, and they'll be happy to answer any questions you have and show you around. There's a lot of great- there's also archival Star Trek comics that IDW puts together. Comics from back in the day with the original crew. And yeah, hopefully it scratches your Trek itch. Yeah it's- there's so much out there and it's such a great medium of its own on its own right.

GRACE:

Thank you so much for talking to us. We're wrapping up on time right now, but are there any final thoughts you want to leave our listeners with? Anything you absolutely feel is essential for knowing about Star Trek in general, as a fan and as a writer?

MIKE:

Yeah, well first of all thank you. Thank you for having me. Thank you for all you do. And I think just as a fan I'm just happy to see it back on the screens in a really robust way. You know the animated series are coming. I'm really excited about the Nickelodeon animated series which is going to be aimed at younger viewers, because there's never really been something just for kids in this Star Trek world, just for them.

GRACE:

Even the animated series?

MIKE:

Even the animated series was like, it's almost more- it's almost skewing more to the regular adult fans. So the Nickelodeon series I'm super excited about. Yeah. So I'm just excited for everything that's coming, and again I just think the message of Star Trek especially right now. I mean as we speak in the world today we need it and we need its message. Thanks for having me.

GRACE:

Thank you so much for talking to us. Where can people find you online?

MIKE:

Yeah. So I grew up before the Internet, so social media scares me. But I do have a Twitter account. It's @Mikecomix which is M I K E C O M I X. It's mostly Star Trek, mostly comics, a little bit of Cubs baseball. Don't let that scare you off. Yeah. So I like to talk about the process and highlight Star Trek artists and their work. So yeah, feel free reach out to me on Twitter.

Transition f/x

SUE:

I think we've got some really interesting stuff from *both* of our interviewees in this episode. And I know Grace you always loved catching up with IDW.

GRACE:

Oh hell yeah I do. They own my soul at this point.

JARRAH:

And they have so much good stuff in the works and on the go. I know I was really excited to see that Jodi Houser is writing for them now, who writes the 13th Doctor comics and is like some of the best Doctor Who comics I've ever read. Yeah, I mean there's a plethora of awesome IDW comics and it was cool that you got to talk to him.

GRACE:

salesman voice Please do check out their fine array of products. *all laugh*

SUE:

And after you're done doing that you can find us on social media. Grace, where can people find you?

GRACE:

You can find me on Twitter @BoneCrusherJenk, and also being drowned in this pile of comics I got at the con.

SUE:

And Jarrah?

JARRAH:

You can find me @JarrahPenguin, that's J A R R A H penguin, and at Trekkiefeminist.com.

SUE:

And I'm Sue, you can find me on Twitter @Spaltor. That's S P A L T O R . As always you can find the show on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram @womenatwarp. You can shoot us an email at crew@womenatwarp.com, visit our blog at WomenAtWarp.com. And for more from the Roddenberry podcast network visit podcasts.Roddenberry.com. Thanks so much for listening.

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