

Women at Warp Episode 39: Jaylah for President

Jarrah: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp. 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 Jarrah, and thanks for tuning in. With us today, we have fellow crew members, Sue.

Sue: Hi, everybody.

Jarrah: And Andi.

Andi: Hello.

Jarrah: And before we get started into our main topic, I just wanted to take a second to remind you about the Women at Warp Patreon. If you go to patreon.com/womenatwarp and pledge a small monthly donation, you support our work in various ways. We use it to host our website and audio, to upgrade our equipment, to travel to conventions, to report on them and to print out promotional materials and things, so that we can spread the word about the podcast to more people. So, if you want to support our work and get access to exclusive content in return, you can head over to patreon.com/womenatwarp. That's P-A-T-R-E-O-N dotcom slash Women at Warp. And thanks so much for all of those who are already supporting us. We massively appreciate it.

And speaking of going to conventions, by the time you get this episode, we will have just got back from Star Trek Las Vegas, which we presume will be amazing.

Andi: Just want to say, we just got back from Vegas. I'm just guessing, but I'm pretty sure I got married. [Jarrah: laughs] I'm not sure who it was too, but I'm very much in love now. Thank you. Thank you for all your well wishes on my new marriage.

Jarrah: Yeah, we all got matching tattoos.

Andi: Definitely.

Jarrah: And at least, two of us are sick from the Con.

Andi: Yes, definitely. [Jarrah laughs] I feel like this is going to be entirely accurate. I feel a little bit like *Star Trek* writers, when they're trying to write about the future from the past, but I think we've nailed it. I think we've past tense nailed it.

Sue: [laughs] All right. Well, upcoming, and actually upcoming, I will be at 50 Year Mission, Cherry Hill. That is August 26th through 28th, near Philadelphia in South Jersey. And then, Labor Day weekend, September 1st through 5th, I'll be at DragonCon. And then, in early October, I'll be at New York Comic Con. And Andi and Grace will be at Geek Girl Con in Seattle. We have panels at all of those events. At least, one panel. So, come find us. And we'd love to hang out with you, just like we hung out with you in Las Vegas.

Andi: Our meetup was intense, but it was great to meet all of you.

Sue: It was awesome. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yay. So, onto our main topic, Captain's log. We've been drifting in podcast land now for more than a year. [Andi laughs] Days seem to run into nights to the point that it's hard to even remember what episode this is. Some days, I wonder whether this is all really worth it or whether I should go get promoted and become a podcast admiral.

[laughter]

Jarrah: It's all you can do to just look at the faces of your crew, and think that they're so awesome and you do really want to spend time with them talking about cats.

Andi: I just want you to know, Jarrah, that you need to find out who you are as a podcaster, as yourself. [Jarrah laughs] I really think it's time for you to find out who you, Jarrah, are inside, and let's get drunk.

Jarrah: But my father was such a self-sacrificing podcaster. [Andi laughs] I don't know [Andi laughs] how I can separate these things. I feel old Andi bones.

Andi: All right. Here's a glass of whiskey, let's just get drunk and it'll all be clear.

Jarrah: Oh, hey, how about-- Andi Bones, how about we go see that new *Star Trek* movie instead?

Andi: [chuckles] That'll be good too, especially drunk.

Sue: This is my favorite thing that ever happened.

Jarrah: Thanks, Sue Pak.

Andi: [chuckles] I'm just trying to justify why I'm drunk all the time.

[laughter]

Jarrah: All right. So, if you have not guessed, we are talking about the newest *Star Trek* movie, *Star Trek Beyond*. We have a warning before we go any further. We did give away some very minor tidbits about the opening scenes, but--

Sue: Spoilers alerts. [mimicking spoiler alert sound] Chilled up.

Jarrah: Spoilers ahead. Spoilers ahead. If you haven't watched it already, turn off your podcast machines, run and hide at your local movie theater, and watch the movie and then come back.

Andi: You can't say we didn't warn you.

Jarrah: So, *Star Trek Beyond*, the newest *Star Trek* film. Andi, do you want to take a stab at a super brief overview in case anyone's forgotten it in the last couple weeks?

Andi: Kirk's feeling sad and a little bit of ennui. Not sure quite what his direction is. So, they're in the middle of their mission and they go to this place called the Yorktown, which looks pretty awesome, by the way.

They get lured into a mysterious nebula, where they get captured and The Enterprise gets destroyed by this dude named Krall, who seems like he's got a lot of anger. They eventually work together and defeat Krall and save the Yorktown. And along the way, we meet a lot of cool characters and our crew gets to be awesome. How is that summary? Was that an okay summary?

Jarrah: Yup, I'd say that pretty much covers it.

Andi: Oh, and also, Scotty has really good upper body strength apparently. [Jarrah laughs] He's been doing his pull ups. I'm impressed.

Jarrah: So, if folks haven't heard it, we did an episode on the previous JJ Verse movies, or Kelvin Universe movies, as we're calling them now. I guess a couple months ago and we talked about *Star Trek 2009* and *Star Trek Into Darkness*. This movie was definitely my favorite of the three. I remember, in our episode, we said how we felt that the previous movies were fun, but they weren't really *Star Trek*.

Certainly, I think this was the *Star Trek*iest of the three for a couple reasons, but one of the most important, I think, being that there's an actual message of peace, unity and the optimism in the ability to triumph over seemingly impossible odds. I really appreciated that about it, as well as the ensemble feel of the movie.

Andi: I agree completely. I think it's a really fun movie, but it also has the backbone of a strong, very *Star Trek* theme. I think they did a lot better at balancing the character moments and giving everybody more to do, in general. I really enjoyed the new characters. I thought the villain was pretty good. I liked the plot, I thought it was paced well. Overall, I really, really liked this movie.

Sue: Yeah. I enjoyed this a lot. One of the first things I was thinking when I was leaving theater was, "Wow, that was funny." And *Star Trek* funny, the way that *TOS* is funny. You could tell that the people behind it were people who really love this property. And I feel that was lacking in the first two. Not that the people behind the first two hated it, but you can tell when somebody really loves *Star Trek* and they get things.

But also, I feel a lot of the fan criticisms of the first two films were heard passed on to who they needed to be passed on to and corrected. We've got rank stripes on the women's uniforms. We had scenes where the background crew was actually diverse in both gender and race and alien-ness. There was even some body diversity, which is really rare in *Star Trek*. So, I was really rather pleased with this film.

Andi: One thing that I think came through is, and this is something that I've been noticing with just the way that Simon Pegg talks about *Star Trek*, he is not just a writer of *Star Trek*, he's a fan of *Star Trek*. He is one of us. You know what I mean? So, I feel like he heard us, if that makes sense. He internalized that criticism and he didn't take it personally, he just took it as these are ways I can make these movies better. And I think he did, and that makes me really happy. He says that he wants to write more *Star Trek*, and I say, let it-- [crosstalk]

Jarrah: Yeah. We also heard that it was actually Karl Urban who raised the issue of the rank stripes, because it had been brought up to him at convention. He's another person who's a real fan, has been a fan for a long time of *Star Trek*. Apparently, he heard the question at conventions and actually brought that up and asked that it be changed. So, if that's true, then that's amazing.

Andi: We talked a little bit in the past about how sometimes we get criticism about being too negative and that the critiquing things is, I don't know, not respectful maybe. But this is exactly why we do. Because every once in a while, you get creators that listen, and that's a really nice feeling to feel like some of the things that-- I mean, I'm not saying that Simon Pegg sat down and listened to our Women at Warp JJ podcast and was like "Yup, okay, taking notes." I'm not saying that. But I'm saying that you can't be overly burdened with fan criticism, but you can't ignore it either.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: I feel they did a good job of listening and then improving their product.

Jarrah: Yeah. I also feel like-- I don't know, I walked out of there being expecting more of other movies, too, in a good way, like, "Look, it wasn't that hard to make your cast more diverse and to give diverse members of the cast more cool things to do."

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: So, one example of that, is we have talked in the past episodes about Uhura's role in the Kelvin movies. I'm wondering what you both thought of her role in this movie and how that compared to the previous ones.

Sue: So, she definitely gets more to do in this movie than in the previous ones. It is not all about Spock. In fact, Spock is the one pining for her in this film, oftentimes. That being said, she's still not a focus character. But we don't really expect her to be a focus character, even though she's one of the main crew members. So, she's got a lot more to do. She's got a lot more, I think, interesting things to do. She kicks some ass, she saves Kirk, but she's still not one of the main story arcs. She doesn't get her own story arc, unfortunately. And that goes to the guest character, to the guest star, really.

Andi: I do really love that we get to see all of the best traits of Uhura highlighted. So, not just her technical strengths, so her ability to listen to signals and her ability at communications, her actual job, but also her personality, her empathy and her love for the crew and her loyalty. I thought all of that really shined through in this movie.

It was really quite a joy to see this happen, because I love Uhura. I've always loved Uhura. I think that this was a good showcase of Uhura. She's still a supporting character, but she's a supporting character, you know? She's a member of the crew, but she's a supporting member of the crew. And I think that they did a good job of keeping her on par with the other supporting members of the crew like Sulu and Chekov.

Jarrah: Yeah. I would say that there are a couple excellent Uhura moments in here that have exceeded the other Uhura moments in the Kelvin verse. Even in the original series movies, there's Mister Universe scene that's pretty cool, pretty fun for Uhura, but these were really, truly standout scenes. The one where she saves Kirk by sacrificing herself, ending up in the part of the ship isolated with the main villain, Krall. And then, the scene near the end where they're still really not sure who this Krall guy is and what he's after other than revenge.

Uhura is the one who finds a tape. By hearing his voice and recognizing his face, even though it's going by so fast, she puts it on repeat. I certainly didn't pick it up looking at her looking at it, but realizes that Krall actually was this Starfleet captain, Balthazar Edison? Was it?

Andi: That's a pretty badass name.

Jarrah: Yeah. He was basically involved in MACO and all of these wars in The Enterprise era of *Star Trek*. When *Star Trek*-- Or, sorry, when the Federation made peace with its enemies, he had nothing to do. He was isolated on this world. Most of his crew died, and went a bit off the rails and ended up becoming obsessed with revenge on the Federation. So, it's her that really unhooks that key plot point twist at the end of the movie. So, I loved seeing Uhura have that pivotal role in the plot, even though she doesn't have her own arc.

Andi: Absolutely. Well said, Jarrah.

Jarrah: I think it's also important to note that she's held captive by Krall, but in no way is it a damsel in distress scenario. She's doesn't come across as needing rescue. In fact, that Spock comes to rescue her and she's already rescued herself. She teams up with Sulu, she's doing stuff behind the scenes. She's perceived by Krall to be sort of the person in charge of that group, and she's always just got her head on her shoulders and doing the best course of action in that type of bad situation.

Andi: Yes. I think it says a lot that even though Sulu and Uhura are captured, they're still moving the plot forward, they're still untangling questions for us and adding to the story. It's not superfluous. They're not just hanging out wailing and waiting for the rest of the crew to rescue them. They're working the situation from their end, if that makes sense.

The damsel in distress trope is a classic one, this is not it, at least not to be. It's possible for you to put a female character in a position where they are in danger or captured without making them a damsel. And in this case, I think they did it.

Sue: Not only that, but while they're working the problem from their end, really, the de-facto leaders of the group that Krall has captured are a woman of color and a gay man of color working together, which is wonderful.

Andi: And it was really, really fun to see them be front and center. One of the main things I loved so much about this movie, is we had whole scenes, long periods of time, where Kirk and Spock are not on screen. I love Kirk and Spock, and I still think that any good *TOS* type movie should be heavily influenced by the Kirk-Spock relationship. I think it's often the heart of the best things about the *TOS*, but it is amazing to be able to just see the rest of the crew have whole scenes in which they shine just by themselves, and that's so lovely.

Jarrah: Yeah. Agreed. What did you think about the Uhura-Spock relationship in this movie?

Andi: I like it. I've always liked the relationship. I get why they're drawn to each other. I think they have good chemistry. I like them, in general. It's always just been annoying to me that they just used Uhura as a plot device to humanize Spock, or at least, that's how it always felt. And in this case, because they're not necessarily together the whole time and because there's more going on plot wise, I felt like it was more an added emotional resonance rather than just the focus of Uhura's story. You know what I mean?

Sue: It definitely was not the focus of Uhura's story.

Jarrah: I agree.

Sue: However, it seemed to me that its only purpose was, so that Uhura would have that necklace/tracking device.

Andi: [laughs]

Sue: The rest of the actual story part of it could pretty much be lifted out. It didn't matter in the story whether they were broken up or not broken up that whole question, or angst, if it was supposed to be angst, was not necessary.

Andi: It might not have been necessary to the plot, but I do think it was helpful in establishing why Spock was feeling torn about Starfleet.

Sue: Yeah. Which fits in with the Leonard Nimoy tribute, which was lovely and unexpected for me. But I again felt that that was a little odd, maybe a little bit forced in there. I didn't believe maybe Spock's turmoil, the way it was written. I understand you know wanting to

help his community and his people rebuild, but just the way it was put in the story felt awkward to me.

Jarrah: I agree. I feel like they needed to have a tribute to Leonard Nimoy. And I felt like it was touching the way it was done, particularly the end, how it tied into the message of unity and cooperation and the importance of teamwork, where Zachary Quinto, Spock, opens the box of Spock's belongings and finds the photo of the *TOS* crew. That was a really beautiful moment. I really love that. But I agree, I didn't totally buy his turmoil. It didn't really feel it was super necessary, but I didn't mind it. I didn't feel it was the strongest movie for Spock as a character, but I am okay with that because it was so strong for everyone.

Why don't we talk a little bit about Jaylah, who we were talking about before as the guest star, who maybe did get to do some of the stuff that Uhura didn't get to do. Although, I don't think they were really directly in competition for screen time. We did talk bit before this recording, and we couldn't think of a time that the episode passed the Bechdel-Wallace test, possibly between Uhura and the woman who had the weapon hidden in the back of her head, but I'd have to look at an actual transcript, because I'm not--

Yeah, I'm not sure that Uhura actually spoke to her and she replied, or whether the woman replied to Sulu or to Krall, but that's maybe the closest time. But there were so many more women characters in this with better things to do than *Into Darkness* and 2009 that I thought it was an example of the time when the test isn't necessarily the best measure.

Andi: Yeah, I was trying to keep an eye out for it, because I knew that we would talk about it. I kept getting distracted by enjoying the movie, which is a good thing. Afterwards, I couldn't think of a specific time, but I also think that we had enough strong women characters, specifically Jaylah, who I believe is a perfect example of a pass of the Mako Mori test, in which you have a female character that has an individual arc that's not reliant on a man. I think she passes that very well.

And then, we had the Commodore, who was basically the Starfleet authority in this movie, and she was amazing. And then, we had the Ensign that was that really cool female alien Ensign. And then, we had you know a bit of a minor female villain. So, there was just a lot more to work with, which is what really we're looking for with the Bechdel-Wallace test, is part of it is just to make sure that the stories aren't dependent on men, but also it's just about having more female characters and giving them more chances to interact.

Sue: It's also a reminder that the Bechdel-Wallace test is not a perfect test, and it is not necessarily meant for an individual piece of art, but is most valuable when used as a metric over a large scale. It averages out to give you a pretty good idea, a pretty good picture of where media stands, because there are many great pieces of work that don't pass, and some that we would consider much less feminist that do.

Jarrah: Yeah, I'd absolutely agree. So, Jaylah is a character who is an alien from the planet that they're on. Her whole family was captured by Krall. Basically, it's not really super clear how, but he feeds off the energy of other people in order to stay young. So, her whole family ended up dying, she escaped and all she wants is to leave the planet. She's discovered a crashed old starship, the USS Franklin, that ends up being Balthazar Edison's starship. But she's basically repaired this almost entirely by herself when she runs into Scotty. What did you guys think of Jaylah as a character? I really loved her.

Andi: I really liked her, because I think she was a good mix of-- She was a character who could fight, but she wasn't just your stereotypical like, "Oh, we need a strong female character, so she better be able to throw a punch" kind of character. She had strong motivations, which I liked.

I thought she was funny. I thought she worked well or her personality worked well, especially with Scotty. They spend most of the time with Scotty and Jaylah together and I thought they were great. I really liked her. I thought she fit in really well with the crew without overshadowing them, and her story made sense to me and tracked throughout. So, overall, I was very happy with her and I think she's definitely the strongest female character we've had for the Kelvin timeline for a non-mean character, I mean, by far. I mean, you have Carol Marcus. Is there another one that I'm missing?

Jarrah: Gaila, Uhura's roommate?

Andi: Wow. [Jarrah laughs] You're really reaching there.

[laughter]

Andi: So, yeah, I think she's the strongest female character we've gotten from these movies and a big step forward, in general.

Sue: I like that she fights, but I like that she does it smartly. She doesn't just go in guns a blazing. She has a plan, and uses her knowledge and her engineering know how to give herself better odds.

Jarrah: Yeah, absolutely. Kirk does have to come to her aid, but it also doesn't feel a damsel in distress situation at all. She's definitely fighting with all she's got. But like you said, she's doing so smartly, and you get the sense that she's giving this guy a good run for his money in this fight. And she's super brave.

Basically, all she wants to do is to leave this planet where all these awful things have happened. When she finally gets to just the look on her face is really touching and it is nice to see at the end, you know even though we're not left on the impression she's going to be a recurring main crew member, she does get basically accepted into Starfleet Academy. So, it leaves the door open for her returning in different ways in other movies, or novels or comics.

Andi: The look on her face that you're referencing, I remember so clearly from the trailer, because it actually made me tear up a little bit in the trailer. And I didn't even know why. I just knew that it was-- She looks beautiful and she looks sad, but she looks happy-- There's just so much emotion there. So, even just watching the trailer, that was a moment that really stood out to me. And then, when I saw the movie and I understood the context of that moment, I absolutely teared up. I thought it was a really triumphant moment for her.

Jarrah: Absolutely. So, we briefly mentioned Commodore Paris, I believe. Do you have any comments on her?

Andi: I liked her. I thought she was a good authority figure/mentor. She didn't get a whole lot to do, but what she did do was significant. We got to see her interact with Kirk before he's made his decision, because the thrust of this movie is Kirk is feeling like maybe he is not doing the right thing. Maybe he's not in the right place. Maybe his place in Starfleet isn't what he really wants to do.

We see her giving him a bit of sympathy at the beginning, and letting him know that he's valued, and he's applying for a admiral position on the Yorktown, and then we get to see her follow that up and have him gotten to the point where he knows what he wants now. He wants to be the captain of the Enterprise. This is a choice that he's making, and he feels much stronger about it and he feels much more comfortable with his choice now. It's nice to

see the authority figure be a woman. I really liked her. I thought she was great. Obviously, having an actor of Shohreh Aghdashloo's caliber was extremely nice to see.

Jarrah: I thought it was nice. She's a woman of color also, not a super young woman. And she has a lot of presence and fills a role that was for Kirk, I guess, kind of similar to Pike in the last couple movies. , not as much-- She's not as much of a parental figure, but certainly she's an authority figure and it was good to see her in that part. I feel like naming her Commodore Paris--

I feel like they had so many names that it can't have been a coincidence that there was an intention to tie her to the Paris family legacy that we see referenced in *Voyager*. I think that that also just kind of-- It's a clue to the regular listeners, like this is an important character. So, I thought that was cool.

There were a lot of Easter eggs references for pre-Kelvin era fans in a way that I don't think would alienate any new viewers. I thought that that was really excellently done. It showed like, you didn't really have to make that choice. Because I think people would say, and I mean, I would be among them for the other movies, like, "Well, they're fun and I'm glad if they bring new people into *Star Trek*." But you can also bring new people into *Star Trek* without losing the heart and the philosophies behind *Star Trek*.

Sue: Yeah. And those references in the first two movies, you saw coming from 10 miles away. It was like set it up. Here it is. Here's the thing you're waiting for, and here they were natural and organic and we probably missed a bunch of them. So, I think when it's done that way where you could notice them and still have everything make sense, or not be distracted or taken out of the story by them, that's when they're done well.

Jarrah: Absolutely.

Andi: And it felt more of just small tips of the hat, like a subtle homage rather than a beat you over the head, see you *Star Trek* fans. *Star Trek*. *Star Trek*. It felt much more like these people really knew and loved *Star Trek* when they were writing these rather than just trying to shoehorn them in.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: Because for me, the worst thing of any of these movies has been the rerun of *The Wrath of Khan*, Spock death with Kirk. I had just seen *The Wrath of Khan*, cried my eyes out. And that moment still remains the most wrecked I've ever gotten emotionally from *Star Trek*. And then, when they redid it, it felt like it lacked all of the heart of the original and that it was just a cheap ploy. That's how it felt.

Maybe that's not how I meant it, maybe that's not what they were going for, but however, for whatever reason, in execution, for me, it just did not work. And in this movie, I feel like it worked a lot better, because they were still telling their own story, but they were doing it in a way that reminded us that it's a part of the larger *Trek* universe and I thought it was really well done.

Jarrah: So, obviously, a big news story going into the first few days before this movie came out, is the fact that they wrote Sulu as a gay character or possibly a bi-character, but Simon Pegg and others, I think, described him as gay. George Takei wasn't necessarily too cool with that. How did you feel like it played out in the movie itself?

Andi: I liked it. I liked that it was a no big deal moment, but it also was a moment where you get to see a happy man with his family. It also added to the movie itself, because it added a

lot of stakes for the Yorktown. Like, you get a couple of moments where you see Sulu and he's holding it together and he's being professional, but you can feel his worry, because his husband and his child is on that station. And if they don't save them, he's going to lose his family, and that just adds to the stakes a lot.

It's not made a huge deal of, but it's also not irrelevant. So, I thought it was really well done. I'm super bummed that George Takei is not on board. That makes me really sad. It's like a sour note in what I consider a really great move for *Trek*. First of all, that obviously we've needed a gay character for a long time. I thought it was a great move to have it be a main iconic character, not a new character that you could just dismiss as the gay one. I just thought it was executed so nicely that I'm sad. There's no other way to say I'm sad that he's not on board. I'm sad that he wasn't excited.

Jarrah: I think that he had some points, but I appreciated Simon Pegg's point that if you made it a new character, like just say you brought in Jaylah and made it clear that Jaylah was queer, then it would have been like, "Oh, you brought in the gay character." No matter how great that character was in all other respects, it would have been like, you checked off a box and they would ignore other stuff about the character.

This is the way that they made sure that wasn't possible, because we already have opinions and feelings about Sulu. I thought it was awesome to get to see that it wasn't made a huge deal of. We got to see his family. It wasn't like, "Hey, did you hear that Sulu has a husband?"

Andi: Like a big rainbow banner.

Jarrah: Yeah. [laughs]

Andi: Rainbow [crosstalk] raining from the sky. I can [chuckles] just picture it.

Jarrah: Yeah. But it was still really important, the timing in the movie, because it happens so early on and then you still get to see him doing amazingly kickass stuff. You get to see that Kirk has seen him with his family and actually is happy about it. Kirk watches them walk away and smiles. And then, Kirk is asking him to do all of this really important, dangerous stuff, and Sulu is kicking butt at it. So, I thought that it was not made out to be like a key plot point, but it was important.

Andi: I also really love that when they took this major step, they did it with a man of color. Because [sighs] unfortunately, when it comes to hate crimes against the queer community, the queer people of color are just massively overrepresented in those numbers. The amount of hate crimes that are perpetrated against them is just stunning. They need more representation, even like-- It's something that needs to be addressed. It really meant a lot to me that when they finally took this step that was long overdue, they did it with a person of color. That was important to me.

Sue: So, this is from an article in Entertainment Weekly that says, "Echoing his earlier comments to the Hollywood Reporter." He wrote, "I hoped instead that Gene Roddenberry's original characters and their backgrounds would be respected. How exciting it would be instead if a new hero might be created whose story could be fleshed out from the scratch rather than be reinvented? To me, this would have been more impactful. And then, despite his feelings about the importance of respecting Gene Roddenberry's vision, Takei said he is nonetheless delighted there's now a gay *Star Trek* character and flattered that the Sulu decision was intended as an homage to him."

Andi: That makes me feel better.

Sue: Yeah. So, it's definitely less angry than was originally being reported, [chuckles] which makes me happy.

Andi: Yeah. The thing is though, I don't think it's an either or.

Sue: Yeah, I agree.

Andi: This is the thing that I'm just-- I get that it's a big deal, because it's the first. Well, the first major, I should say. But there's nothing that's going to stop them from bringing on new gay characters. So, I don't know. I don't understand why it can't be a mix of both. I get his point. I really do. I just don't agree with it, I guess.

Jarrah: Yeah, I agree. But overall, I think it worked out well in the film, and I thought that John Cho did a great job as Sulu. I think everyone really did a great job in their main character roles in this film generally, and it was just great to see.

Andi: The two things I loved most about this movie. One was theme. The theme was definitely about how we're stronger together than we are apart. I feel like that's a really important thing to think about in this day and age, to think about the fact that differences make us stronger, and that sticking together and caring about each other is important. I just feel like it's an important message and a lovely one and a super, super *Star Trek* one.

It was really nice to see that actually played out by so many ensemble moments. I love that the climactic lead up to the final battle, is like they're putting together this plan on the fly and literally every single person is contributing, and they're building this plan together as a team and I love it. It just made me so happy.

Sue: Well, even the scene that Jarrah mentioned before when Spock is finding Spock Prime's things, and he opens the picture of the *TOS* crew, it's that feeling of they're supposed to be together, they're supposed to be a team.

Andi: Yeah. It's lovely.

Jarrah: So, another thing that I don't think we've talked too much about. We talked a little bit about Krall, but I wanted to talk about Krall a little bit more, because one thing we talked about was, okay, so in the last movie, you cast a white British guy as a character that could and probably should have been a person of South Asian descent. And in this movie, you cast a black actor, Idris Elba, as the villain. And my concern, seeing the previews was that he was covered in so much blue prosthetic makeup and his voice sounded-- You couldn't even tell it was Idris Elba, that I was concerned it was going to be wasted, similarly to Oscar Isaac in the most recent *X Men* movie.

But I actually was pleasantly surprised because of that twist at the end. We do get to see Idris Elba looking a bit more like Idris Elba and having more motivation. I thought he was actually a more successful and believable villain than Khan in the last movie.

Sue: Yeah. I just wish we had gotten some more of that backstory earlier in the film-

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: -because we spent so much of it going, "Why is he doing this?"

Jarrah: Yeah. He has that line that says, "This is the frontier pushing back," which I actually thought was a colonialism comment at first. I thought maybe his alien home world had been

inadvertently destroyed by the Federation or something. And that line never really tied into his end mission.

Sue: Yeah. Yeah. But if there were even-- We've only each only seen it once. But if there had been hints or any indication earlier, maybe it was cut, maybe it was supposed to be there, I don't know. I think that he would have seemed less one dimensional.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: I really appreciated though that at the end, when we've had his backstory revealed when he and Kirk are facing off, I really appreciated having Idris Elba in that role.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. Absolutely.

Andi: Because Idris Elba is a topnotch actor, and he really makes you feel a lot. So, I was sitting there and-- I felt it at that moment. I felt his anger and his sadness, like all of this pain that's driven him to just want to burn it all down. I don't think he would have gotten that with a lesser actor.

Jarrah: I agree. It ended up being really well done. I agree though, Sue, I think he could have had more backstory, but I think that there was a lot of pressure for them to do right by all the characters in this movie and I think overall they succeeded, whereas *Into Darkness*, I think failed a bit on the Khan motivation front as well as on the ensemble. So, I'm inclined to be like, "Well this one did better on both the villain motivation and giving ensemble time." It didn't cut back on the action. It was still a really successful action movie. It just proof that that can be compatible with *Star Trek* dynamics and values and vision.

Sue: It's hard to get all of that into a two-hour film.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: Especially because we do ask so much of *Star Trek*.

Andi: Yeah. I thought the balance was really good and I thought the pacing was really good, which to me *Into Darkness* was one of the worst paced movies ever. They really fixed that in this one. I'm just overall just so happy, because I know that there--

Okay, so, the three of us really liked it. I have heard from other fans that generally the consensus that I've heard has been pretty good. I have heard from some that did not like the movie, and that's fine. But it was critically and commercially successful movie at this point I think we can safely say that, and that makes me so happy, because we're on the cusp of having a new TV show.

And our franchise, I feel like has just been revitalized by the success of this movie. So, even if you didn't like it, I feel like you have to be happy to be a *Star Trek* fan right now. We're getting so much new content. We have these creators that clearly care about our franchise and that just makes me so excited, so excited to see what they're going to come up with, so excited to see new *Star Trek* stories. So, overall, I'm super pumped. I walked out of theater and I was just smiling ear to ear. Just so happy.

Jarrah: We're getting close to time, so maybe we should just go around and do some final thoughts. So, maybe I will start with Sue. Anything that you wanted to add to this discussion?

Andi: Sue science corner.

Sue: [laughs]

Jarrah: Right.

Sue: Oh, my. All right.

[laughter]

Sue: So, first of all, I'm not a physicist. I really enjoyed the refraction thing that Jaylah hooked up. I totally buy it that in some future time, she could create this cloaking device for the Franklin, and even use refraction to create duplicates of herself. I found it a little bit hard to suspend my disbelief when those duplicates started doing different things at the same time. Not sure about that one, but it was still pretty cool. So, I'll give it that. That is the main science thing that I think took me out of it in theater.

I thought the Nebula was really cool. I thought the swarm idea was great and terrifying. And in general, I really, really enjoyed this way more than I expected. To be honest, I have not really been a fan of the first two movies in this timeline. And until, the first few months before the release of *Beyond*, I was not necessarily looking forward to it. But then, as we got more information, I was being positive, and I was pleasantly surprised and quite happy with it, actually. So, I'm a thumbs up.

Andi: Overall, I really liked this movie. The only thing I would want to add is-- So, there was a lot of dislike of the first trailer, which I got the dislike. I thought it was a fun trailer, but it didn't really show some of the strengths that ended up being in this movie. It looked very generic space action movie to me. However, one of the things that they hated was the use of the song, *Sabotage*, which was obviously used in the first movie for Kirk as a way to set up Kirk as a character, as a young character, moving into his arc, and then was used again in this movie in this huge action set piece.

I was sitting in theater and I was thinking to myself, oh, there are some people who are going to absolutely hate this. They're going to hate it. I was like, "I don't care. I love this." I loved it so much. It was just one of those fun, cheesy, cool moments that just like the music-- Oh, by the way, we haven't talked about how this movie looks. But it looks great. It looks beautiful. I thought that it was just such a cool scene to see the music, and the plan and the visuals all come together in this big, epic moment.

So, if in case you were wondering, I loved that moment and I just wanted to make sure to give it a shoutout, because I'm sure that there are some fans that are going to not so much love it. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. I really liked a lot of the way that the music and the visuals work together in this movie. I would say, that it definitely had a different look than the JJ movies. I mean, people will probably joke there was less lens flare, but it also was just less bright and shiny. That was also partly due to the costume designer, Sanja Hays, who also did the costumes for *Insurrection*. I overall really liked them beyond just that the uniforms looked a bit more similar *TOS*, but the flight suits and other non-main uniforms that they had bridged between *TOS* and *Enterprise* in a way that I thought was cool and it looked great on screen.

So, there was a different look in the visuals as well as the aesthetics on-- We also aren't on the ship for very long, but on the planet and in terms of the costumes, and I thought it worked out really well. Sue was definitely a skeptic heading into the last couple months. I saw the first trailer, I read that interview that was going around that apparently quoted Simon Pegg is saying, "He got hired to make the movie less *Star Trek*," and I was definitely ready to not be a fan of this movie.

I saw Justin Lin was directing, and I didn't really know that he had a background in directing films other than action movies. I was like down on the potential for action movies, and I have been proven wrong and I am very happy about that. So, yeah, I'm glad to be challenged to keep an open mind until I see the final product. And that over the past couple months started to get a lot more excited about things-- I was not disappointed. I thought it succeeded on a number of fronts and I would happily go see it again a couple of times at least.

Andi: I think that this is something to keep in mind as we get more and more news out of the *Star Trek: Discovery*, because I understand they parcel out this news and you take it piece at a time and you are trying to predict. Give it a chance. Always give it a chance. If you see it and you don't like it, fine. I mean, nobody on this show is going to be mad at people for doing constructive criticism, because that's our jam.

I've been noticing so much just generalized negativity that I just don't understand. Content creation is hard, and giving creators the benefit of a doubt until you've seen the finest final product is a good idea. And in this case, I was also-- It wasn't so much the stuff that was coming out about the movie that was making me nervous. It was more that I disliked *Into Darkness* pretty intensely. It's pretty hard to come out of a movie that you thought was very bad and then get excited for the next movie. To me, that was my biggest stumbling block. I'm just really glad that they were successful. That makes me very happy and very excited moving forward.

Jarrah: Absolutely. I think you're right, Andi. The franchise is in a really great place right now. So, that's very exciting. So, we're going to wrap up our discussion here, but wanted to let you know that earlier on today, we had a discussion with our Patreon patrons about *Star Trek Beyond* and what they thought. I think we had three or four people who had already seen it. And one person who was dead set against seeing it, but actually after listening to the discussion, changed her mind, so that's cool. We're just going to play you a couple highlights from that discussion.

If you want to be involved in future discussions like this or have access to other exclusive content from us, you can hop over to patreon.com/womenatwarp. That's P-A-T-R-E-O-N dotcom slash Women at Warp.

Other thoughts on costumes?

Male Speaker: The bull shoulders, I wasn't sure about them either. But as you're watching the movie, it's thankful. It's so strong, they don't take away from what you're watching. You're aware of them, but as you're watching Kirk and Chekhov, you're still drawn to the story. So, I was worried about that. But they made me [audio cut] And the uniforms aboard the ship were really good. I was really glad they upgraded those.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: I liked Jaylah's look.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: It looked functional. You know what I mean? it looked like the kind of outfit you would wear to live in the middle of nowhere and always be on the defensive. It looked comfortable and functional and like you could kick ass in it. But she also looked cute. So, I liked it. I thought they did a good job. We went from Carol Marcus and her bra to Jaylah.

Jarrah: Oh, my gosh. [crosstalk]

Andi: In the woods. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. So, Sulu's gay.

[laughter]

Jarrah: [audio cut] that portrayed?

Female Speaker 1: I thought they did a good job and I'll tell you why. It just seemed like they made it just like a normal, because I had the audio descriptive version of it, because I'm visually impaired. It seemed like it's just an inscription, "Oh, it was his husband and that was it." Federation just didn't make a big deal. They humanized it in a way that was far better than any other thing I've seen, if that makes any sense.

Jarrah: I said before everybody was on the call that my head canon, is that he's bi, because that doesn't force prime timeline Sulu into the closet. It also doesn't suggest that it's a choice that in this timeline he chose it and just the timeline of who he met and fell in love with. So, that's what I choose to believe, because--

Andi: Yeah, there was a whole bunch of people who were like, "No, he was straight. Changing universes doesn't make someone gay." And I'm like, "I haven't seen it yet, so I can't tell you." [crosstalk]

Jarrah: [chuckles] That was what Takei was upset about, was that it forces this character he played, Sorry, there's a cat into the office.

[laughter]

Andi: I was just like, "Guys, bisexuality is a thing."

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: He could be the woman or attracted to women in *The Original Series*, because I think-- That's the other thing, is we don't really get very much indications to Sulus' sexuality in *The Original Series* anyway.

Female Speaker 1: No, we don't actually.

Andi: Yeah. We get a little bit of him hitting on Uhura mirror, mirror, but--

Sue: Which is yet another alternate universe.

Andi: Yes. We also get him walking behind that super buff Klingon babe and like giving a wink-wink to Chekov. But that just indicates he might be attracted to women. That doesn't mean he can't end up with a man. And as a bisexual person, it's like, "Come on, guys."

Jarrah: I also was impressed that they destroyed *The Enterprise* right at the beginning in a pretty cool way, honestly. That weapon was scary.

Male Speaker: Yeah.

Jarrah: And that it gave the whole reason for why people got split up into the groups that they did.

Sue: Yeah. I'm just so tired of the ship being destroyed.

Andi: [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. But this one made it through two and a half movies.

[laughter]

Male Speaker: As I was watching, I was worrying about the ship being destroyed again and so early in the film. But as you're watching, I was grateful that they made it work, that it served the story. I'm like "Okay, The Enterprise was destroyed again." But it worked.

Jarrah: Yeah. And the part where you see that it being rebuilt, that was a moment that we've kind of seen in the classic movies before where they look at the new Enterprise and I thought that was nice.

Male Speaker: Yeah.

Sue: The bees, I guess. I'm not going to remember the name of the thing it reminded me of, but it was in *Stargate Atlantis*. I think. *Atlantis*. It might have been [crosstalk] where it had all the tiny little things that together would swarm and destroy a piece of technology, and that's what I thought of. I mean, how much sci-fi is truly original? Probably none of it. But [chuckles] yeah--

Jarrah: Frankenstein. The replicators.

[laughter]

Sue: The swarm was really kind of terrifying.

Jarrah: Yeah. It's the perfect-- [crosstalk]

Female Speaker: Yeah. It was actually.

Sue: Yes, the replicators.

Female Speaker 1: It might have been worse than the Borg in some ways. It reminded me of the Borg in some ways, because they had to be linked, and some other technologies like the Borg. But in a way it was worse, because it was a lower-level intelligence. Yes, they were intelligent, but I don't think it was as sophisticated as the Borg. I think it almost made them more terrifying in a way, if that makes any sense.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Male Speaker: Definitely more visually terrifying to see them just swarming and just completely destroying the ship. So, yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, one thing I did like-- I don't remember this from the last two movies, but it's been a while since I watched them, so I may be wrong. But I liked how the Universal translator, you could hear the original underneath the translation. It sounded like really cool simultaneous translation. One thing I didn't like was the font for the subtitles. I was like, "That is so cheesy." The scrolling sci-fi silver letters. I was like, "Just go with something simple." [chuckles]

Sue: So, did you guys see it in 3D?

Jarrah: Yes.

Male Speaker: Yeah.

Sue: They put a 3D effect on the subtitles.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: I feel like they were also moving.

Jarrah: Yes. I--

Sue: It was really, really distracting. [laughs]

Jarrah: I think that they scrolled across.

Sue: They like floated-- [crosstalk]

Jarrah: Floated out, yeah. So, it maybe was partly that it was in 3D that made it distracting. I feel the subtitles should never be distracting. Maybe if you didn't see it in 3D, it might have been better.

Sue: The only one that made me think it was there for the 3D was Scotty on the cliff.

Jarrah: Oh, yes.

Sue: Which I also thought was totally unnecessary.

Jarrah: And then like--

Andi: Because Scotty is not an action hero. [laughs]

Jarrah: No, exactly. The idea that he pulled himself up from that, I'm like, "Sorry, you--"

Andi: Yeah. No.

[laughter]

Female Speaker 2: Alternate timeline, Scotty does CrossFit.

[laughter]

Male Speaker: I was going to say I was really grateful, like I keep saying that this story, the overall story, you get to the end and you realize, "Okay, they're telling a story about humanity. This is not just some random another villain who wants to destroy the Federation [audio cut]." It ties back to humanity, to our experience, how humanity needs to grow and evolve. You get to the end and you see that was the message.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Male Speaker: You know it didn't get the message of humanity. He's resentful and bitter and over the all the hundreds of years that he's forgotten the message, you know humanity need to grow and evolve. So, I was really grateful and really impressed by that. It tried back to

Star Trek. This was a *Star Trek* movie for me. So, I was really grateful, really impressed by that.

Female Speaker: I would like to say it was my favorite from the Kelvin timeline. Although I thought that-- What's her name, the girl with the white hair?

Jarrah: Jaylah.

Female Speaker: Jaylah felt a little bit to me like Rey. And that I didn't like too much, but okay, it worked. But I really liked that Uhura got to kick some ass, and I thought that to me was super cool when she goes in and punches the alien and goes in. Overall, I really liked it. Again, my favorite from the Kelvin timeline.

Jarrah: Well, I haven't seen it, because I was so supremely disappointed by the first two that I didn't want to give them my money a third time, but I feel like now I'm thoroughly convinced that they can have my \$12 or whatever.

Captain's log. Our discussion of *Star Trek Beyond* is almost at an end or is it a beginning? No, it's actually the end.

Andi: [laughs]

Jarrah: But before we go, Andi, where can people find you elsewhere on the internet?

Andi: Easiest place to find me is on Twitter, [@firsttimetrek](#), where I live tweet through my first time through *Star Trek*. I just started *Voyager* today. Woo.

Jarrah: Woo.

Andi: So, yeah, that's the easiest place to check me out.

Jarrah: And how about you, Sue?

Sue: You can find me on Twitter, [@spaltor](#). That's S-P-A-L-T-O-R. Or, over at [anomalypodcast.com](#).

Jarrah: And I'm Jarrah, and you can find me on Tumblr at [trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com](#) or on Twitter, [@J-A-R-R-A-Hpenguin](#). You can also contact us as a show by going to our website, [womenatwarp.com](#), or emailing crew@womenatwarp.com. Or, you can comment on our Facebook page, [facebook.com/womenatwarp](#) or on Twitter, [@womenatwarp](#).

And you can also leave us a review on iTunes, which is awesome, because it gives us feedback but also helps more people find our show. So, those are all the ways that you can get in touch with us. And thank you so much for joining us this to talk about *Star Trek Beyond*.

[*Sledgehammer* song by Rihanna]

[Transcript provided by [SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription](#)]