

Enjoying other worlds and those who bring them to life

Mark Pavilons



?The science fiction world has a lot of people doing seriously imaginative thinking.?

Paul Krugman

?In science fiction, we're always searching for new frontiers. We're drawn to the unknown.?

Ridley Scott

Record numbers of humans and extraterrestrials descended upon the Metro Convention?Centre over the Labour Day long weekend, in search of answers.

What they found, amidst the hundreds if not thousands of costume-clad individuals, was a place where time stood still and reality was merely an opinion.

Despite being a life-long science fiction fan, Fan Expo 2016 was my first real convention. I?had said to myself every year, as my birthday neared, that I would attend, poke around and catch a glimpse of some celebrities.

Two years ago, my niece and son made the journey downtown and obtained an autograph from my own favourite sci-fi icon William Shatner. Yes, I admit it, I am a Trekker and I don't care who knows it!

As a teen, I watched Star Trek on Saturday mornings, on the black and white TV in our rec. room. Living in rural Caledon, the TV required ?rabbit ears? to get that signal just right.

This was quintessential science fiction; required viewing if you will, for any would-be space traveller.

I can recite lines from many of the iconic episodes of the original series, which aired in the late 1960s.

Shatner was our generation's Buck Rogers and Neil Armstrong rolled into one.

I followed his career and found many of his projects pretty decent. Just when the world was ready to write him off, he did something unprecedented ??he won consecutive Emmy Awards for what were, in my opinion ? the two best legal dramas in television history.

I'm talking about The Practice and Boston Legal. Not an easy feat, for any actor.

Boston Legal was one of the few shows that my wife and I watched together, religiously. We got hooked on the antics of Denny?Crane (Shatner)?and Alan Shore (James Spader). These two oozed pure comic genius.

The older Shatner got, the busier he became, doing bit parts, commercials and all sorts of things. His popularity hasn't waned one iota. Now, the 85-year-old plays straight man to a group of immature oddballs in Better Late Than Never, a ?reality??show produced by Henry Winkler. Shatner plays mentor to Winkler, George Foreman and Terry Bradshaw as they tour Asia and basically act like juvenile delinquents. Priceless. It may not be high-brow TV, but it's very entertaining.

When Shatner arrived for his autograph session at Fan Expo, the place erupted as fans cheered loudly.

My press credentials didn't get me very far, or should I say close, to this star. Photos were prohibited, so all I could do was watch from afar. But hundreds paid the premium to get his autograph and many brought books, posters and photos with them for him to

sign.

As Christopher Lloyd wrapped up his photo session, I snuck close, got his attention and snapped a beauty. He looks very good for his 77 years and he told me he tries to live a healthy life. It has paid off.

He's still revered for his roles in Back to the Future, and still poses next to that iconic time-travelling DeLorean. One of his best roles, in my opinion, was Klingon Commander Krige in Star Trek III: The Search for Spock.

Lloyd is a comic genius. He was involved in Taxi, The Addams Family and won several Emmy Awards for his quirky characters. I've always found him to be unique.

Gazillions of geeky fans went to Fan Expo to see legend Stan Lee for his last Canadian appearance. Lee, 93, is best known as the godfather of comic book heroes, as writer, editor, publisher, artist and former president of Marvel Comics. He is a superhero himself and appears in small cameos in many of the movies including Iron Man, Thor, Captain America ...

I was lucky to get a shot of him signing autographs. The lines were massive.

The real action came from distant galaxies, which came together at Fan Expo. People ? tens of thousands of them ? all ages, all walks of life, gathered to celebrate ?strange, new worlds.? A lot of work went into their cosplay costumes, right down to the buttons and shoulder pads. You have to admire their dedication and commitment and it made us all smile.

The Stormtroopers donned elaborate, and likely very expensive costumes, to tour the public areas and pose for photos.

My oldest daughter wanted to go, simply to look at the costume-clad geeks and geekettes. She found it all very neat.

My adult niece, who loves anime, purchased a few items for her growing collection.

I ?enjoy any event that brings together like-minded people from all over the world. I find it, to coin a phrase, ?fascinating.?

We who witnessed the birth of modern science fiction through Star Trek and Star Wars are getting on in years. Fortunately, there are many, many younger ones embracing the ?final frontier.?

?I just had a crazy, wild imagination all my life, and science fiction is the greatest outlet for me.?

Steven Spielberg