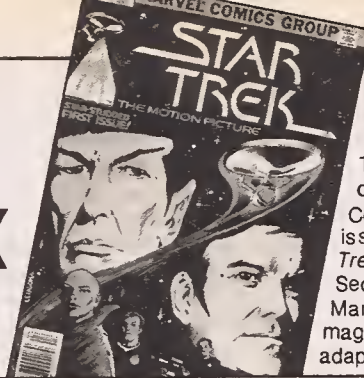


# STAR TREK The Comic Book

By JAMES H. BURNS



Left: The cover of Marvel Comics' first issue of *Star Trek*. Below: Sequence from Marvel's magazine-sized adaptation.

One of *Star Trek—The Motion Picture*'s worthier merchandising spin-offs is Marvel Comics' movie adaptation, published in both the company's *Super Special* magazine and the first three issues of their new monthly *Trek* comic. Written by Marv Wolfman and drawn by Dave Cockrum, not only is the adaptation interesting reading, but it helps shed light on one of the film's major inconsistencies.

"One of my largest problems in adapting the movie was that so much of the screenplay confused me," says Wolfman. "I really wish that there was an explanation for why a lot of it happened. While there are a lot of good sequences, a lot of things in the script are contrived. In addition to it being basically a rehash of 'The Doomsday Machine' and 'The Changeling,' I didn't think that they successfully did anything with the characters. The story itself did not make a lot of sense. For good or bad, the script for the comic is exactly the screenplay Paramount sent us because I felt that if I left out anything, I might be missing what I wasn't getting. For instance, I couldn't understand why Decker decides to commit 'evolutionary suicide' when he joins Ilia at the end in that 'heavenly' send off. You don't even understand why the crew has that last-minute repartee at the end saying, 'Is that the birth of a new race?' Where was it indicated that there was going to be a new race created? Obviously, then, if you didn't like the movie's script, you'll find, unfortunately, that the comic is bogged down by the same poor storyline."

Despite Gene Roddenberry and company's inability to supply Marvel with a solid story and script, Paramount was extremely cooperative in other areas. Wolfman and Cockrum were sent numerous live-action sequence photos and storyboards early last July. A few weeks later they were allowed to visit the effects studios in Hollywood.

"We never saw any effects film; there was none to show us," complains Wolfman. "Doug Trumbull basically told us what they were *planning* on doing. They showed us a couple of preliminary sketches. . . . For instance, the entire Voyager stuff was not even *designed* at that point. If our interpretation of the effects isn't what you see in the movie, you'll understand why."

The adaptation's other major fault is that it looks rushed.

"Both Dave [Cockrum] and myself were rushed," explains Wolfman. "I was writing it in two-page clips as Dave would hand it in and he had to do two pages a day. We had to feed it to the inker on that level, so I don't



think that there was a period where I could write it any slower than two to three pages at a sitting, which absolutely prevented any sort of continuity of writing. The adaptation is not nearly up to par. Dave will tell you himself that he hated his art job. He's not used to working that fast."

"It's not my best work by any means," Cockrum agrees.

However, Wolfman and Cockrum have the opportunity to redeem themselves when they initiate a series of *original* stories, starting in issue number four.

"We want to keep the flavor of the movie and the *Star Trek* universe as Gene Roddenberry created it," says Marvel's editor-in-chief, Jim Shooter, "but we also want to make sure that it's good *comics*. By that I mean we'll probably have to plot it a little tighter and get a lot more visual action into it and not a lot of just 'sitting around on the bridge.' Basically it will be episodic, like the original TV series. We want to try to keep the stories short and punchy—rather than like some Marvel series that take several issues to tell a story—because I think that that's more in the spirit of *Star Trek*. Unfortunately, though, due to some legal technicalities, we can't use any characters or situations that appeared in the original series."

Issue number four begins a two-part tale that involves the *Enterprise* encountering a haunted house suspended in outer space while carrying an alien prisoner back to his home planet—a world that both the Federation and Klingon Empire are vying for. Problems arise for the crew when, at the same time

that they're dealing with the scientific implausibility of the haunted house, their prisoner starts wreaking havoc aboard the ship. At press time, neither Jim Shooter nor Dave Cockrum knew how these conflicts would be resolved, since Wolfman left Marvel to work at DC Comics before writing the story's continuation.

"I regret that I won't be able to work on the *Star Trek* comic," Wolfman says. "I was really looking forward to writing it. For some reason, Marvel won't let me write it, but that's okay, because they won't find out what was intended for the second half of my story."

Mike W. Barr has been assigned to write *Star Trek* number five and then Marty Pasko will take over the regular writing chores. Even though Cockrum is sure of Pasko's capabilities, he feels problems might arise since the writer lives in California and he lives on the East Coast.

"It's going to be by long distance, because we're separated by 3,000 miles. I'm accustomed to sitting down with the writer and possibly even having equal input on the storyline. I'm not sure how well that's going to work with Marty being in California."

Nevertheless, if Marvel devotes the attention and injects the quality into the comic that's found in their finer efforts, Pasko and Cockrum could succeed where the Paramount bureaucracy failed: continuing the *Star Trek* legend with innovative adventures built around intelligent stories that still maintain and respect the original series' mark on science fiction. ★