

In October, 1989, Leonard Nimoy flew up to the Bay Area from Los Angeles for a *Star Trek* Convention in San Jose. KALX-FM (U.C. Berkeley) was the only radio station in the entire Bay Area he talked to during his visit. I had the honor and privilege of chatting with Mr. Nimoy by phone from his hotel.

**Q:** What *Star Trek* question are you the most sick of hearing?

**A:** Whoah! (Chuckles) You open with the big ones! I'm not really sick of hearing any of them. I think probably the one that I hear the most now is: will there be any more?

**Q:** At different times in your career, you've tried to disassociate yourself from Mr. Spock. How do you feel these days about him?

**A:** I'm not sure that's really accurate. I did a book in the '70s that was misconstrued, a book called "I Am Not Spock." I could probably make a lot of money betting people who ask me this question that they haven't read the book. I have always had an affection for the show, affection for the Spock character, and I have had tremendous opportunities as a result of it. Obviously, it's better when there is *Star Trek* to do. In the '70s, for a long time there wasn't, until we made the first film in the late '70s. There was a long period of time where there was a lot of *Star Trek* and Spock association, but no work connected with it.

**Q:** What has been the worst thing about playing Spock? And what's been the best?

**A:** (Pause) Let me start with the best. I think the best has been the opportunity to change the character, to take the character through some interesting adventures (life and death) and juggling of values and personal reassessment. I think the most difficult thing has been to stay consistent, because if the writers don't grasp that—if the writers are not in touch with what has happened before and aren't in touch with the curve of the life of the character—it's difficult for them to stay consistent and keep the character credible.

**Q:** It must be a rare opportunity to be able to play a character for that long—that many years.

**A:** Well, that's true. That's exactly the point. You know, it has been a long time since '66—23 years, yeah.

**Q:** What's your favorite non-*Star Trek* acting role?

**A:** I've had a number that I was very excited doing. I had a great time on Broadway doing "Equus" in the '70s. The one man show that I did called "Vincent," about Vincent van Gogh, was very gratifying. The show that I did in Israel, with Judy Davis and Ingrid Bergman, playing Golda

Meir's husband in "A Woman Called Golda." All were very gratifying.

**Q:** You've now branched off into directing. What drew you to directing?

**A:** I think I finally decided that it would be lazy not to. I had always had an inclination to do it. And when they called me to do *Star Trek III*, or to ask me to be involved in it, the question that was put to me—Spock had died at the end of *Star Trek II*—and the question came in this very interesting form. It was: would you like to have anything to do with the making of *Star Trek III*? So I said I would like to direct it and act in it. And that kind of kicked the directing career into a different gear than it had been previously. I had been dabbling with it up to that point, dabbling with directing. I finally decided it was time to take it seriously.

**Q:** Was it difficult to direct and act at the same time while you were filming?

**A:** Yes, it is. It is. It's very demanding. People do it; I'm not the first to have done it. And I don't prefer to do it. I prefer to do one job or the other. I like acting; I like directing. Doing both in the same project is not what I would choose to do, but in *Star Trek*, obviously if I was going to direct, that was the only way it was going to be. I would have to be the actor as well.

**Q:** At this stage in your career, do you prefer directing or acting?

**A:** I'm not ready to give up acting, but I'm getting a lot of interest as a director and a lot of choices; so it looks like I will be doing more directing than acting for a while.

**Q:** Of the four films you've directed so far, which has been your favorite?

**A:** (Pause) Gee, that's a tough one. That's a tough one. I'm very proud of *The Good Mother*, which I did with Diane Keaton. Not exactly what you would call a box office success, but I think a very meaningful film. Disturbing to a lot of people—I understand that—but a meaningful film. *Star Trek IV* was finally the *Star Trek* that I hoped to do. It was my kind of personal *Star Trek* that I had hoped to make. And, of course, *3 Men and a Baby* was an enormous hit and very entertaining for a lot of people. So, I can't choose just one.

**Q:** 50 years from now, what would you most like to be remembered for?

**A:** Oh yeah. (Pauses and chuckles)

**Q:** That's a different question from what do you think you'll be most remembered for?

**A:** Yeah, well, I was going to say I don't think I have much choice. (Laughs) I mean it'll probably be one of those: "Leonard Nimoy, best remembered for..." or "best known as..." That kind of

thing.

**Q:** You've had a diverse career in television, in the movies, and even as a recording artist. Which has been the most gratifying?

**A:** The second time around has been pretty exciting. I had a really good ride on the television series as Spock. And a lot of great stuff came of it. But to get a resurgence here in the '80s with the movies and with a new directing career is pretty exciting.

**Q:** Your records get a lot of air-play on KALX. Do you have fond memories of your career as a recording artist?

**A:** (Laughs) I laugh about it. I enjoyed doing it. I don't have any pretensions about whether or not I was a very talented recording artist. But I was sincere. (Laughs again) We had a good time! It was an experiment.

**Q:** Have you accomplished everything you'd like to as an actor?

**A:** Yeah, yeah. I don't have any more unfulfilled fantasies. And whatever I do in the future is going to be icing on the cake. I've acted all around the world. I've acted in films and in television and on Broadway and on stages around the country. I've had a great time doing it. I'm a very happy guy in that respect.

**Q:** Were you a film or theater buff when you were growing up?

**A:** Not really. I wouldn't call myself a buff. I do remember pleasantly the movies that I saw as a kid and as a teenager. I don't know that I'd call myself a buff. I guess I saw the pictures other people saw. I used to love the Abbott and Costello movies, and I also loved Mickey Rooney and Spencer Tracy films and *The Grapes of Wrath* and all the biggies—*Gone with the Wind* and stuff like that.

**Q:** How did you break into show business?

**A:** Well, that's a different question. I started acting when I was eight, in a little neighborhood theater in Boston where I grew up. And I continued working in children's theater until I was in my late teens and then just made the decision that this was what I wanted to do. And I applied to be a student at the Pasadena Playhouse and came to California.

**Q:** Who are your influences today as a director? Who do you admire?

**A:** Oh, there's such a range of great people whose work you have to pay attention to. Spielberg, Coppola, Woody Allen. I won't even be able to name the whole list. There are a lot of people I pay attention to and say: how do they do this? How do they do what they do? And look at their choices of material. Paul Mazursky—an old friend whose work I admire a lot. Phil Kaufman, who directed me in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. When he makes a film, it's special. A lot of people.

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