

# Star Trek Beyond (2016)

Rated PG-13. Running time: 2 hours

Our content ratings (1-10): Violence 3; Language 1; Sex/Nudity 1.

Our star rating (1-5): 4

*What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals  
that you care for them?*

*Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned  
them with glory and honor.*

*You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and  
the fish of the sea,*

*Psalm 8:4-8*

*Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one  
keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against  
another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not  
quickly broken.*

*Ecclesiastes 4:11-12*

Justin Lin, director of the Fast and Furious films (which lived up to their names), seems to place the new Star Trek film into hyperdrive in the numerous action scenes. Yet there also are some good moments that fans of the crew expect, the quiet intervals when the characters exchange thoughts and feelings. This 3<sup>rd</sup> in the reboot series is good adventure fare, though not quite up to the standard set by the 2009 *Star Trek* that began the process of rebooting the beloved series.

After a funny failure in diplomacy by Captain Kirk (Chris Pine), the film switches to *The USS Enterprise* docking at Yorktown, the massive space city that resupplies deep space vessels. I loved the way the camera closes in on this massive city situated in a gigantic bubble filled with skyscrapers, monorails, and vast squares, parks, lakes, and walkways populated by throngs dressed in a variety of clothing styles. Enhanced by Michael Giacchino's stirring music, this short sequence took me back to the very first Star Trek film in 1979 when a slightly longer but similar sequence featured the launching of *The Enterprise*. I still recall the thrill at seeing *The Enterprise* for the first time on a giant screen where we could truly appreciate its majestic size and grandeur.

Something new is added this time: when the crew disembark from their ship we see that the spouse with a daughter who meets Sulu (John Cho) is a man. The partner has no speaking part, and some might even miss this touch of LBGT if they are not paying attention. Captain Kirk's famous words well describes what this film does: "to boldly go where no man has gone before."

Kirk has been having thoughts about leaving the service, and Spock (Zachary Quinto) too is thinking of turning in his Federation badge so he can return to Vulcan and help repopulate his declining race, despite his feelings for Uhura (Zoe Saldana). However, soon the *Enterprise* is again dispatched on a rescue mission at the behest of the alien Kalara (Lydia Wilson) who claims that her ship and crew have gone down on Altamid, a rocky planet on the far side of the nebula.

As soon as they arrive close to the planet they are attacked by what seems to be a swarm of space bees, small drone fighters that wreak havoc on *The Enterprise*. Not even the usual ingenuity of engineer Montgomery Scott (Simon Pegg, who also co-wrote the script) can get them back into the safety of

hyperspace. A band of lizard-like aliens led by Krall (Idris Elba) storms into the ship. During the intense fighting the *Enterprise* is broken into pieces, and Uhura sacrifices herself by separating the section with her and Krall from that holding Kirk and Spock.

Uhura and most of the crew are taken captive to Krall's base, while Scotty crash lands by himself in an escape pod, but soon joins up with the comely alien Jaylah (Sofia Boutella) who calls an old stranded starship *The SS Franklin* her "home." She says that if Scotty will help her repair the disabled ship, she will help him rescue his friends. Meanwhile Dr. "Bones" McCoy (Karl Urban) and Spock escape in a pod together. Spock is injured by debris sticking out of his side, and the doctor has to use harsh 19<sup>th</sup> century means to stop the bleeding.

Krall is after an item stored aboard *The Enterprise* called an abronath, a key to an almost endless source of power that he wants to use to destroy the United Federation of Planets. His dark motive for this is revealed only at the climax of the film. Ironically, the abronath was the gift that Kirk, on his diplomatic mission that opened the film, had tried to give to the aliens, but which they had vehemently rejected.

There is a lot of frenetic excitement in a series of scenes involving rescuing the crew. Kirk rides a fast motorcycle to divert Krall while his companions get closer to the enemy, and, of course, there is an epic space battle when Krall unleashes his swarm against Yorktown. Part of the strategy of dealing with the huge swarm of attack drone is to disrupt Krall's communication system by broadcasting at a certain frequency a song that Jayla had been listening to on *The Franklin*, The Beastie Boys' "Sabotage". The swarm of drones is under the command of a central control, so breaking its communication is crucial to stopping the attack.

The special effects are first rate, from the beautiful scene of the space city already described to the exciting climactic

battle. Idris Elba's Krall is far less a dramatic villain than Ricardo Montalban's Khan, but this is due to the script's failure to round him out enough, and not the fault of the actor. Some of the humor of the TV series is displayed, especially in the opening sequence, as well as in some of the dialogue of the crew. Not as philosophical as the original TV series, there are still some exchanges worth discussing, such as Krall, disdainful words about the unity for which The United Federation of Planets stands, "Unity is not your strength. It is a weakness." Captain Kirk replies, "I think you're underestimating humanity."

There is also a touching memorial to Leonard Nimoy when the younger Spock of this universe is informed that the older Ambassador Spock has died, and we see Nimoy on a small video screen. There is also another nice tribute to the original actors that will especially warm the hearts of those old enough to go back to the TV series. And if that doesn't, then there are the words right before the credits roll, "'In Loving Memory of Leonard Nimoy' and 'For Anton.'" The untimely death of Anton Yelchin, the actor who has been playing Pavel Chekov makes us aware that, despite all of the technology that Star Trek comes close to worshiping, we are all still mortal.

*This review with a set of discussion questions will be in the August issue of VP.*