

## **The Final Episode of The Final Frontier**

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By the time you read this article Captain Picard and company will boldly be going into rerun heaven and the final original television adventure will already have aired. I'm a little sad to see these guys go, but not as sad as I could be. This isn't as tearful a parting as last year's final "Cheers" episode. Right now the cast of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" (ST-TNG) is filming its first full length feature film. We know that we will be seeing these guys again soon. Also the episodes as a whole this season have been somewhat mediocre. The producers' loyalties have been divided between "ST-TNG", "Deep Space Nine", "Voyager" and "Star Trek 7" and it has been showing. So I'm glad it's ending now before it turned into the disaster "LA Law" became after it overstayed its welcome.

"ST-TNG" was never as ground breaking or daring as the original "Star Trek". ST-TNG's viewpoints on many issues were very conservative compared to the many controversial issues network television was willing to tackle at the same time. This was always somewhat ironic since Roddenberry originally asked for the show to be syndicated so he could have the freedom to present his liberal ideas. In the end ST-TNG was intelligent, well acted, well produced, entertainment. I don't think it raised the social conscience of the nation, but it sure made Paramount a lot of money.

I will always be a "Star Trek" fan, so don't think I'm putting it down. I'm just seeing ST-TNG for what it is. ST-TNG was never brave in the area of tackling social issues. The Captain was still a white male. The females were nurturing figures (ex: doctor, counselor), not power figures. We never had a homosexual character on the show. The show in fact never dealt frankly with sex in any way, shape or form. Instead the show was slick, smart and fun to watch.

The one theme that was carried over from the original series that ST-TNG wholeheartedly embraced was an optimistic view of the future. This optimism is very uncharacteristic of the sci-fi genre as a whole. The one other trick or hallmark of "Star Trek" – any version – that has made it rise above all other science fiction television programs is its focus on the human element. They've never forgotten that to tell an all-encompassing space story you have to hold on to the simple human story at its core. This is probably the key to "Star Trek's" success more than anything else.