

Plenty of stars for this trek

Fans, actors thrilled to be at the first Las Vegas "Star Trek" convention in two years

William Shatner talks to his fans at the 55-Year Mission Tour convention, a "Star Trek" gathering, in Las Vegas.

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LAS VEGAS — Capt. Kirk couldn't stand still.

Walking quickly back and forth on stage, William Shatner enthusiastically teased fans, poked fun at himself and made the audience howl with laughter.

Age 90, Mr. Shatner is showing no signs of slowing down as fans discovered at the 55-Year Mission Tour,

a "Star Trek" convention, Saturday at the Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

Mr. Shatner clearly had fun answering questions from fans and encouraged young kids to speak boldly into the microphone and make their voices heard. Capt. Kirk wants everyone to be bold.

And they were. One fan teased Mr. Shatner after he gave a long answer to a young boy's question.

"Where did he go?" Mr. Shatner asked this fan, who was next in line.

Without missing a beat, the fan told Mr. Shatner, "He grew up!"

Capt. Kirk and the large audience laughed.

Fans were masked at the five-day Creation Entertainment event, and actors in the dealers' room wore masks and signed autographs from behind

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plastic shields at their tables. People attending the convention were required to show proof of vaccinations or be tested for COVID-19.

But for fans and actors who haven't had a convention in two years, it was a love fest for "Star Trek" and a chance to see longtime friends and stars.

The bond between fans and TV stars has grown so much over the decades that it's not unusual for them to chat during impromptu encounters in the halls or the dealers room.

Several fans came from the Santa Barbara area. One of them was Amanda Payatt, who walked proudly around the convention with Nomad. As most fans of the original "Star Trek" series know, that's the floating probe looking for its creator. Don't upset it.

Special moments at the convention included Dennis McCarthy, a keyboardist with Glen Campbell who went on to compose the theme of "Star Trek:

Deep Space Nine," conducting the Nevada Pops Orchestra. Chase Masterson, forever known as Leeta on "DS9," sang an enthusiastic blend of jazz standards and a favorite song from "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" before an audience in one of the smaller theaters.

On stage in the main ballroom, George Takei, aka Sulu, reflected on "Star Trek's" power to embrace differences and diversity.

Walter Koenig talked on the same stage about all the wigs he had to try on when he was first cast as Chekov, which officially was "Star Trek's" attempt to include a Russian on the bridge. That was true, but another reason was to have a character to appeal to young fans, someone similar to Davy Jones of the Monkees. Hence the wig for Chekov's early episodes.

The convention also celebrated the empowerment of women in unprecedented roles, in front of and behind the cameras, thanks to "Star Trek."



Amanda Payatt, a Santa Barbara "Star Trek" fan, stands with Nomad, a probe that floated around in an original series episode.

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