

Memories of the Future - Volume 1

Wil Wheaton

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From Encounter at Farpoint to Datalore, relive the first half of Star Trek: The Next Generation's unintentionally hilarious first season through the eyes, ears and memories of cast member and fan Wil Wheaton (Wesley Crusher) as he shares his unique perspective in the episode guide you didn't even know you were dying to read.

ENJOY snarky episode recaps!

EXPAND your Technobabble vocabulary!

AMUSE your friends with quotable dialog!

BOLDLY go behind the scenes!

Memories of the Future - Volume 1 Details


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From Reader Review Memories of the Future - Volume 1 for online ebook

Chuckernaut Goddeeris says

Must read for any trekkie, especially if you like Next Gen or Wil Wheaton in general. I did not remember the episodes but the recaps and recalls from Wil are way better than just watching the shows - it's like getting an MST3K commentary. Highly recommend for the fellow trekkies.

Simon says

Wil Wheaton and I have a lot in common: liberal politics, bitchin' facial hair, and fond childhood memories of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* -- albeit from opposite sides of the television screen. His recaps, reviews, and behind-the-scenes stories of the first half of the first season of *TNG* are endearing as hell.

Unfortunately, they're not without their flaws. Wheaton is a 30-something geek writing for an audience of 30-something geeks; there's common cultural currency there, part of which is incessant reference *to* that currency. That's fine, if queasily recursive; I like a good in-joke as much as the next guy.

But there's a trick to dropping pop-culture references, and Wheaton hasn't quite mastered it. Allusions are for texture. They add depth, or humour, or resonance for readers who catch them, and stay out of the way of readers who don't. In *Memories...*, Wheaton leans hard on jokes that should be decorative, not structural: nearly every page has a fan-servicing non sequitur that grinds the writing to a standstill. It's lazy and it's pandering, and he's better than that.

He's also better than the disjointed stream-of-consciousness style that belies the book's live-blogged origins. The conversational tone is engaging, and his enthusiasm is infectuous, but there's "spontaneous" and then there's "first draft," and while I'll forgive a lack of polish on screen, it's a lot harder to swallow in a book I paid actual money for.

The book's charming, warts and all, I enjoyed it immensely, and I'm excited for Volume Two -- but I hope Wheaton gets an editor before then.

Kevin says

I enjoyed reading this book. The episode recaps were quite funny and the behind the scenes sections were really interesting. I'm kicking myself a little for buying a physical copy of the book instead of the almost half as expensive digital version. It is not very likely that I will reread this book, and since it only covers half of season one I don't feel like I got enough bang for my buck. I would have preferred to pay the same price for the entirety of season 1 in one volume. If I decide to pick up volume 2 I will definitely be going with the digital version.

Amanda Fasciano says

Wil does an excellent job going back through the first episodes of ST:TNG and recounting his memories. It's great fun, as he is looking at it now as an adult and recounting things he was doing and thinking as a teen. Absolutely loved it!

Hoyt says

An absolutely hilarious memoir/review of the first half of the first season of Star Trek: the Next Generation from the perspective of a 15-year old Wil Wheaton. The level of loving snarkiness was perfect, and the behind-the-scenes insights were great. Wheaton goes to great lengths to inform the reader about the process by which Wesley Crusher became one of the most hated characters in sci-fi history (in a mostly joking way), and how he was essentially powerless to stop it.

The book is broken up into one chapter per episode, with each episode getting a snarky description/review, then a section of behind the scenes goodness, quotable dialog/technobabble, and finally a letter grade.

I'm definitely buying volume 2!

Sophie Anderson says

An Insider Review of TNG

I love reading anything written by Wil Wheton and this certainly isn't an exception. His sarcasm and inside geek jokes make the reviews of each Trek episode fun by and pleasing to read through. If you're a fan of Next Gen andy's want a little inside scoop from someone that was behind the scenes, this is the book for you. On to Volume 2...!

Chris says

There's something inherently sad about child actors. They're called upon to do what older actors have been doing their whole lives, often acting alongside people who know their craft so much better than they do. To match the level of their adult counterparts, they have to work just that much harder, and they still get pigeonholed into fairly flat characters. For a lot of directors, even a poor child actor is good enough to fill out the character that has been created for him or her, so expectations are usually pretty low. In the end, a lot of child actors either burn out or give up.

Wil Wheaton wasn't a bad actor as a kid - anyone who watched *Stand By Me* can agree on that. He certainly wasn't what he could have become, but as child actors went, he did okay. Perhaps if he had been given the right roles with the right people, he would still be acting today and impressing us with the depth of his talent. As it was, he was on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, which sent him down, let us say, a different path.

Wheaton's experience on *TNG* was one that a lot of the fans (and I count myself among them) seriously

under-appreciate. From the age of fourteen, he was given the unenviable role of playing one of the most despised characters in modern science fiction, at least before Jar Jar showed up. In the early heyday of the internet, before liveblogging and Twitter and Facebook, there was Usenet - an early internet discussion group. And one of those early groups was the infamous alt.wesley.crusher.die.die.die. The fans would speak of "The Wesley Crusher Problem" and write horrible fanfiction that would put Ensign Crusher through some of the most depraved torments they could think of. A small, but very vocal segment of the *TNG* fan base actively hated Wesley and, by extension, Wheaton.

I think he could have easily been forgiven for dropping out of the public eye forever after being treated like that. Fortunately for us, he has chosen otherwise.

With the growth of the Internet, Wheaton has really found his place. He's a tech evangelist and one of the most active bloggers out there, discussing tech, games, family, politics, and whatever else he feels like talking about. He's carved out a space for himself that doesn't rest on his *Star Trek* credentials, and even if he had never been on the show, he'd still be a fine and upstanding member of the online community.

Surprisingly enough, he does not reject his days as Wesley Crusher, but embraces them. As terrible as it could be sometimes as The Kid - overlooked by writers and directors, hated by fans - he still got to do what most fourteen year-old boys (including this one) can only dream of doing: playing a space explorer on TV. He got to work with a group of fine men and women, and helped to create a show that would be truly beloved around the world. On balance, the good vastly outweighed the bad, and Wheaton was able to fold that experience into his life, making him a better person for it.

Memories of the Future is Wheaton's tribute to his days on *Star Trek*. As he describes it, the book isn't a salacious tell-all, revealing all of *Trek's* dirty secrets. It's more like "you're flipping through your high school yearbook with your friends." It's an honest look at the first half of the first season, described only as someone who truly loves it can do: with snark, sarcasm and admiration for the work, but no illusions about when it was... shall we say, less than up to snuff.

It starts with *Encounter at Farpoint* and goes up to *Datalore*, covering the first twelve episodes of Season 1 (the summaries of the remaining episodes are forthcoming in volume 2). Each episode is summarized, in a hilarious and sarcastic fashion. True to his geek roots, he manages to work in references to all of the sacred touchstones: Monty Python, collectible card gaming, Dungeons and Dragons, and of course, the other *Star* franchise which we shall not name. He isn't afraid to call out the writers when they make stupid choices, such as Dr. Crusher asking to bring Wesley onto the bridge during a major diplomatic/security crisis (*Code of Honor*) or having him casually solve a major plot point that all the experts in the room have been breaking their brains over, and then leave with a snide, "Heh. Adults." (*The Battle*).

There's quotable dialogue included for each episode, ("Oh, your species is *always* suffering and dying" - Q, *Hide and Q*) and Obligatory Technobabble ("Come off the main lead, split off at the force activator, then reversing the power leads through the force activator, repulsor beam powers against *Tsiolkovsky!*" - Wesley, *The Naked Now*). There's also a Behind the Scenes Memory, giving us a good look at what it was like for Wheaton to work on the show, often showcasing how little he really knew about what was going on, and a section called The Bottom Line, which looks at each episode in the context of the whole series.

The episode recaps are at once both sentimental and brutally honest. Where there are flaws in the creative process, Wheaton points them out with a kind of rabid glee. Where there are gems of creativity, he shows us where they are as well. It's the kind of look at *TNG* that could only have been done by someone who was a part of the show and loved it. He writes with clarity and honesty and, just to be sure I point it out again,

humor. Lots and lots of humor.

It's a very quick read, and a very enjoyable one. For bonus points, go find the "Memories of the Futurecast" podcast, wherein Wheaton reads selections from the book. It's even funnier than reading it, and is a good way to kill fifteen or twenty minutes. And we podcasters have to stick together, right Wil? You and me, right? Right?

I may be overestimating our camaraderie.

If you're a *Trek* fan, this book will be a nice visit to a better time. What's more, this will probably make you want to go watch the first season again, if only to see if some of those early episodes are nearly as bad as he's making them out to be. I can't wait for volume 2.

Jack says

The actor behind Star Trek - the Next Generation's least favourite character delivers its most-favourite literary offspring: a behind the scenes look at how season one came together, full of sly pokes but empty of scuttlebutt. Great fun, but probably only for fans of the show.

Bob says

As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be Wil Wheaton.

I was nine when TNG debuted, and Wesley Crusher was a role model. Here was a child prodigy saving the day with his science projects, he had a cool haircut, and those sweaters were pretty rad, too. Well, I wasn't too big a fan of the sweaters, but I identified with Wesley, and for what it's worth, this is about when I started embracing my status as Smartest Kid in the Class (which, granted, only lasted until middle school). Did I mention that one of the two VHS tapes available during my summers at my Grandma's place on Long Island, and thus viewed dozens, if not hundreds of times, was 'Stand By Me' (the other one being 'Jaws')? Point is, the book's great. It's a snarky, nostalgia-fueled look back at his childhood and, to a certain extent, mine.

Ian Coomber says

As someone who only got into TNG during the later seasons, and hasn't had much experience watching the earlier ones, this book was a great way for me to recap on some of the episodes I was only barely familiar with, and in a genuinely humorous way.

Although it's fair to say that a fair chunk of the humour comes from self depreciation, it is generally relieving to finally read a book that doesn't put Star Trek on the pedestal, and gives an honest account of where it goes wrong. Not every episode can be a 'Darmok', and for a series that is (possibly too?) well known for its views on equality, pointing out the obvious sexism and racism in episodes such as 'Code of Honour' is something which I have rarely come across before.

The fact it was written by a cast member also adds to not only the authenticity of the book, but its charm as

well. Wil gets to explain to where the die.die.die fans came from, and also has the objectivity to actively agree with them.

While the book isn't perfect, some of the long running gags are a bit too long running, but it is nice to read something of Wil's that isn't entirely autobiographical (and no, I haven't read *Sunken Treasure*, but with £80 for postage, you wouldn't have read it either!)

FINAL GRADE B+

Gewbook says

So much fun, this was just like sitting down and watching with a really witty friend who loves ST:TNG as much as you do, but can also see the obvious shortcomings of these early episodes. The only place I disagree with him was on the one where they jog everywhere, I just can't get past how silly it is. Anyway, I wish Volume 2 was really real.

Justin says

I've been following Wil Wheaton for quite some time, mostly by happenstance. I stumbled upon his blog back around 2001 or so, led there by my long-standing fondness of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and ended up being a fairly active participant on the message boards he maintained at the time. Since then, I've enjoyed watching him on his ascendant path to nerd spokesman, but for some reason have never gotten around to reading any of his books until now. While this one is a little rough around the edges in a few places, it delivers a perfect mix of snark and nostalgia.

The book is a collection of short reviews that Wil originally published online with AOL TV Squad. The reviews cover the first thirteen episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s uneven first season, and Wil apparently subjected himself to extensive rewatches while writing them in order to refresh his memory. If you own the series on DVD or have access to Netflix streaming, I highly suggest you do what I did: follow his example and watch each episode before reading its review. It definitely heightens the experience.

The first season of TNG has its high points, but it often swings between unintentionally hilarious and plain awful. Honestly, it's hard to take seriously the vision of the future presented by the hair and makeup stylists of the late 1980s (I sensing something, Captain. Aqua Net. Aqua Net and... and rouge. So... much... rouge!) Wil calls out the inherent silliness of these early episodes from the perspective of someone who worked behind the scenes, enriching the hilarity with trivia and personal recollections. Best of all, he does it with a palpable fondness, contrasting the ridiculous bits with the truly good ones, and taking plenty of time to give credit to his wonderful costars as they navigated through a show with questionable writing but enormous potential.

The only problem I have with the book comes from the format it was initially presented in, I think. Wil initially wrote each review as a humorous online column. Thus, he packs a lot of one-liners into each chapter, and flavors them with plenty of inside baseball from *Star Trek* and general nerd culture. Being a *Star Trek* nerd, I appreciated most of these asides, but there was a groaner every now and then. It was never enough to detract from my enjoyment of the book, but a few paragraphs skirted the line of reaching just a bit

too much for a joke.

Minor quibble, easily forgotten. Honestly, this is a great book for anybody who has ever watched the series, and a perfect companion piece for watching it again. It's also worth looking at for anybody who has a general interest in science fiction, since it offers an acerbic and often hilarious look at a seminal science-fiction franchise.

Pattie says

I love this book. It is so honest, its wonderful. It was like I was having a conversation more than reading this book. I am not a Trekkie, but I am starting to watch and like more of the shows; which at first was a chore than entertainment. If you think STNG is just so so, than you will love this book and laugh till you cry.

Jillian says

This book was a quick and entertaining read with a lot of laughs in it! I really enjoyed the insight into Wheaton's personal memories, but also the critical look at the episodes themselves and the parts that talked about the writers, directors, and other actors and what it was like working with them.

My only complaint is that, at times, it was painfully snarky in an effort to be funny, crossing over into just plain mean, which made some parts just not funny to me at all. I felt this was especially so where some self-deprecating bits regarding Wesley's character are concerned, like Wheaton is trying really hard to make sure that we understand he was as fed up with the way Wesley's character was handled as we were and, further, that it wasn't his fault and Wil Wheaton and Wesley Crusher are two different people. Over and over, to the point where I began to feel like he was trying to convince himself of all this as much as the audience, which there is no need to do because we are logical people who understand actors are only doing what they can with what they're given for their character.

Anyway, for me it was kind of hard to get through some of the synopses because of that. But, underneath all that, the criticisms were spot on and I enjoyed the behind-the-scene looks, so I just kind of read around the overly snarky bits.

Erik says

Pretty good!

The episode summaries maybe try a little too hard for laughs, but the insights and behind-the-scenes perspectives are invaluable. Nobody got the same view of the production that Wil Wheaton did.

My opinion of some of the writers/directors/producers went up, but for others it went way, way down. In particular, D.C. Fontana's treatment of Wil is cruel *and* unprofessional. Ugh.

Recommended for TNG fans!

