

Shatner launches Starfleet Academy exhibit

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Fifty years after Captain James T. Kirk first took the helm as commander of the starship U.S.S. Enterprise, William Shatner strode confidently back onto the bridge and claimed his post once again.

The Montreal native, known for many TV and film roles but adored by legions of Trekkies around the world for his lead role on *Star Trek*, briefly sat in the commander's seat for photos during an evening gala event on May 12.

Just a few minutes earlier, Shatner took the stage as the keynote speaker before a sold-out crowd of 1,000 people inside the museum for the world premier launch of the Canada Aviation and Space Museum's new exhibit, *Star Trek: The Starfleet Academy Experience*.

"For the first time on this planet the future has come to Ottawa, alright?" he said to cheers.

"I always thought this meant Jus-



Fifty years after Captain James T. Kirk first took the helm as commander of the starship U.S.S. Enterprise, William Shatner strode confidently back onto the bridge and claimed his post once again, along with his wife, Elizabeth, during the May 12 gala launch of the Canada Aviation and Space Museum's new exhibit, *Star Trek: The Starfleet Academy Experience*.

ERIN MCCRACKEN/METROLAND

tin Trudeau," he quipped.

Shatner wasn't the only *Star Trek* star to shine on stage.

John de Lancie, who starred on various *Star Trek* TV series as the character "Q," and René Auberjonois, who portrayed Chief Security Officer Odo on *Star Trek: Deep*

Space Nine, also made brief appearances, much to the delight of the crowd.

Attendees also included a number of politicians, including Mélanie Joly, minister of Canadian Heritage, who took the stage to speak about government funding

and museum innovation, and, in the audience, Marc Garneau, minister of transport, whom Joly referred to as "our very own Spock."

50 YEARS

"The Starfleet Academy experi-

ence brings 50 years of *Star Trek* to life in a fun, accessible, immersive way," Shatner said, reading from a script.

"So 50 years of *Star Trek* — can you imagine?" he said.

See CAPTAIN, page 43

28 km

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Captain Kirk lands in city for exhibit

Continued from page 41

He recounted the call he received from *Star Trek* creator and producer Gene Roddenberry, who wanted Shatner to play the lead role of captain for a second attempt at a *Star Trek* pilot.

"It was great. It had heroes and villains and aliens and beautiful women in green paint in tiny bikinis —everything I'm interested in," Shatner joked.

The pilot sold and the show ran for three years "barely hanging on," and was eventually cancelled.

"And then slowly it was being replayed on stations ... and people began to see the show the way we had hoped from the beginning it would be seen."

"Gradually it became popular again, and 50 years later ..." he said, his voice trailing off as cheers filled the museum.

"Unimaginable that a show lasts. I mean, people don't last 50 years. I'm having trouble lasting 50 years," the 85-year-old quipped. "The show has gone on to become a phenomenon in show business. Or as Donald Trump would say, 'It's huge.'"

To further mark the milestone anniversary, the Royal Canadian Mint struck a new \$10 coin that depicts Shatner as Kirk when he first brought the character to life on the small screen. The coin was unveiled during the gala ceremony.

FANS FLOCK TO GALA

Case in point, Sherry Boucher and her husband Jason Dubeau, of Greenboro, attended the gala dressed as Vulcans and had their photos taken with Shatner and enjoyed the evening spectacle, which included glow-in-the-dark sticks with cotton candy, photo-ops with costumed characters and live entertainment, including shows by aerial acrobats.

Tanya Harrison and her friend Gaelan D'costa didn't have the opportunity to travel at warp speed, and so spent much of the day leading up to the celebration on the road.

"I drove nine hours to get here," said Harrison, who came in from London, Ont., picking her friend, D'costa, up in Toronto on the way.

For D'costa, the gala was an excuse to dig out his Klingon mask, which he last wore more than 20 years ago in middle school.

Despite his penchant for Klingons, his favourite *Star Trek* character is Data, the endearing android from the *Next Generation* television series.

"I identified a lot with Data as a kid," D'costa said.

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WILLIAM SHATNER

As an immigrant, he said the character resonated with him. The android knew he was different though he looked human, and he tried his best to fit in and learn how to be a good person.

"He tried to figure out how things worked," said D'costa.

CAREER DAY

The public now has the chance to figure out how things worked as recruits at a Starfleet Academy career day — the exhibit's premise — working their way up from recruit to pilot.

The experience is designed to offer a window into "the science behind the science fiction" of *Star Trek* and share lessons in how the show influenced real-life technologies, including a functional tricorder, lasers and teleporters, said Shatner.

"So the Star Trek Academy experiences uses the *Star Trek* franchise as a springboard to teach visitors about science and technology,"

Shatner said.

Visitors will learn about various Starfleet careers, pilot a starship and face the challenging Kobayashi Maru, which will test their character.

Visitors are welcomed to the 930-square-metre exhibit inside a reserve hangar next to the museum, by signage in three languages — English, French and Klingon — before they turn a few corners and feast their eyes on a large model of the Enterprise.

There are also models of other iconic vessels, along with gadgets, characters from the show and props, such as costumes.

This summer, kids will also have a chance to fall in love with the exhibit. Week-long Starfleet Academy Junior Cadet camps will offer a variety of adventures, from learning the Klingon language to taking a real flight in a Cessna aircraft.

The *Star Trek* exhibit will remain at the museum until Sept. 5.

For exhibit details, visit starfleet-academytour.com.



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Greenboro residents Sherry Boucher and her husband Jason Dubeau transformed themselves into Vulcans for the May 12 gala launch of *Star Trek: The Starfleet Academy Experience*, a new exhibit presented by the Canada Aviation and Space Museum.

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