

Nimoy inspired generations of sci-fi fans

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For generations who've grown up on science fiction, not loving Leonard Nimoy was—as his Mr. Spock might say—highly illogical.

The actor, who died Friday at age 83, gave heart, soul and humanity to the Vulcan officer on the U.S.S. Enterprise, first in the 1960s Star Trek TV series and later in movies.

But those who watched him—and made him an icon of geeks everywhere—saw so much more, especially kid fans who grew up and passed that adoration on to their children and grandchildren.

How many men and women over the years journeyed to the final frontier of their backyards and set their pretend phasers on "stun"? Or greeted their best pals with the Vulcan "live long and prosper" salute, arguably the nerdiest secret code ever?

For those whose formative years were the 1950s and '60s, Nimoy was like a cool uncle who'd stop in from time to time to play a KAOS agent on Get Smart, or go to war on The Twilight Zone, or share screen time with William Shatner on The Man from U.N.C.L.E., years before the lifelong [friends](#) both found themselves on the bridge of a starship.

Shatner's Captain Kirk was the one who got all the alien babes and took a hunk of credit for (usually) saving the day, but make no mistake: Spock was the real star of Trek.

In a series that not only paved the way for Star Wars, Battlestar Galactica

and light-years' worth of material that'd keep the Comic-Con crowd entertained, social struggles emerged, too. And Spock, with his half-human heritage, spoke to anyone who felt a little different or looked at the world from the view of an outsider.

The latchkey kids of the late 1970s and '80s would come home from school to watch Spock, but faced an early lesson in death watching their beloved pointy-eared character die saving the Enterprise on the big screen in 1982's *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. (He ultimately got better thanks to Genesis in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, but since it was a time before Internet spoilers, fans worried about him for a good two years.)

He eventually came back to Earth, putting his memorable voice to work in animated movies and as a narrator. And whenever he showed up, it was special, whether it was on Fox's J.J. Abrams series *Fringe*, as the enigmatic scientist William Bell, or as older Spock with Zachary Quinto's young Spock in Abrams' *Star Trek* movies.

And who wasn't tickled when, after years of being mentioned in Sheldon and Leonard's conversations, Nimoy finally appeared on *The Big Bang Theory* in 2012 as the [voice](#) of a vintage Spock action figure?

Nimoy was undoubtedly one of pop culture's most beloved stars, and he'll live long and prosper in the hearts and minds of anyone who ever brandished a pretend phaser.

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