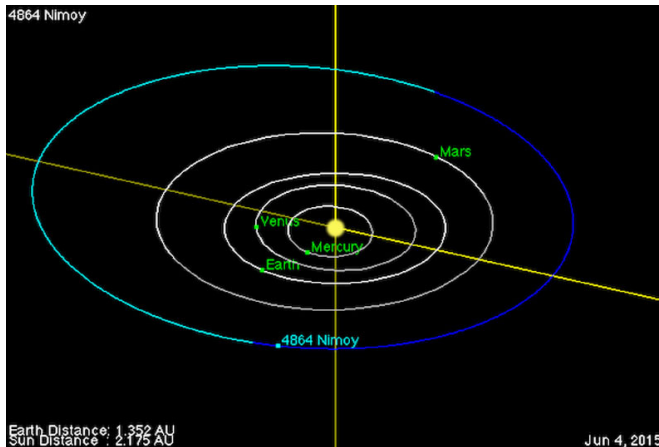


# Leonard nimoy's legacy lives on in the asteroid belt

8 June 2015, by Bob King



On June 2, 2015 a small asteroid – 4864 Nimoy – was named for Leonard Nimoy who played the fictional Mr. Spock in Star Trek. Credit: NASA/JPL

"Fascinating, Captain." If he were alive today, Leonard Nimoy, who played the half Vulcan-half human Mr. Spock in the Star Trek TV and movies series, would undoubtedly have raised an eyebrow and uttered a signature "fascinating" at the news this week that an asteroid now bears his name.

4864 Nimoy, a mountain-sized rock roughly 6 miles (10 km) across, orbits the Sun once every 3.9 years within the inner part of the [main asteroid belt](#) between Mars and Vulcan, er Jupiter.

Here's the announcement from the Minor Planet Center made on June 2:

[\(4864\) Nimoy = 1988 RA5](#)

Discovered 1988 Sept. 2 by H. Debehogne at the European Southern Observatory.

Leonard Nimoy (1931–2015) was an American actor, film director and poet. Best known for his portrayal of the half-Vulcan/half-human science

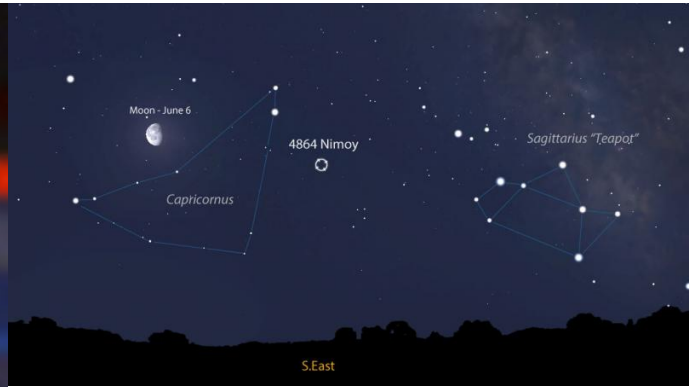
officer Spock in the original "Star Trek" TV series and subsequent movies, Nimoy wrote two autobiographies:

I Am Not Spock (1975) and I Am Spock (1995).

[M.P.C. 94384](#)

4864 Nimoy was discovered by Belgian astronomer Henri Debehogne on September 2, 1988 and given the provisional designation 1988 RA5. This month, Spock's "star" doesn't get any brighter than 16th magnitude as it slowly tracks from Capricornus into Sagittarius in the late night sky. Come mid-July, amateurs with 14-inch or larger telescopes might glimpse it when it brightens to magnitude 15.

Though portrayed as logical to a fault, Spock's chilly exterior hid a heart as big as Jupiter. He was the hero of every nerd, and the perfect foil to Shatner's Captain Kirk's emotional excesses. Nimoy's character showed that command of the facts and rational thinking made one very useful in dangerous and difficult situations. And great to poke fun at.



The sky facing southeast around 2 a.m. in early June. Leonard Nimoy's asteroid is currently in Capricornus where it borders with Sagittarius. Credit: Stellarium

Source: [Universe Today](#)

Leonard Nimoy as Mr. Spock. Credit: CBS Television

While Leonard Nimoy's name will forever tumble about the [asteroid belt](#), his fictional character got there before him. Or did it? 2309 Mr. Spock (former 1971 QX1) was discovered by James Gibson on August 16, 1971. An outer main belt [asteroid](#) about 13 miles (21 km) across and orbiting the Sun every 5.23 years, it's actually not named for the Star Trek character. Nope. Gibson named it for his cat.

The act prompted the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in 1985 to ban the use of pet names for asteroids. Aw, come on IAU, where's your sense of humor? Then again, Nimoy's Spock might have considered the new rule quite logical.

APA citation: Leonard nimoy's legacy lives on in the asteroid belt (2015, June 8) retrieved 14 April 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-06-leonard-nimoy-legacy-asteroid-belt.html>

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