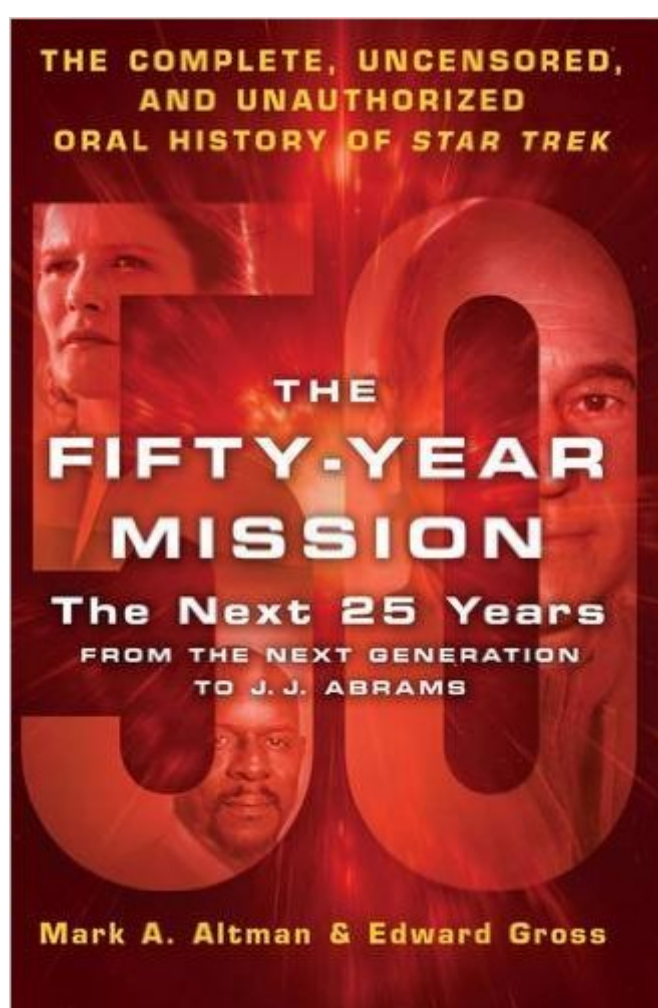


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The Fifty-Year Mission: The Next 25 Years: From The Next Generation To J. J. Abrams: The Complete, Uncensored, And Unauthorized Oral History Of Star Trek



Synopsis

This is the true story behind the making of a television legend. There have been many books written about Star Trek, but never with the unprecedented access, insight and candor of authors Mark A. Altman and Edward Gross. Having covered the franchise for over three decades, they've assembled the ultimate guide to a television classic. The Fifty-Year Mission: Volume Two is an incisive, no-holds-barred oral history telling the story of post-Original Series Star Trek, told exclusively by the people who were there, in their own words—sharing the inside scoop they've never told before—unveiling the oftentimes shocking true story of the history of Star Trek and chronicling the trials, tribulations—and tribbles—that have remained deeply buried secrets... until now. The Fifty-Year Mission: Volume Two includes the voices of hundreds television and film executives, programmers, writers, creators, and cast, who span from the beloved The Next Generation and subsequent films through its spin-offs: Deep Space Nine, Voyager, and Enterprise, as well J.J. Abrams' reimagined film series.

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Customer Reviews

When I read the first book covering the first 25 years, it covered information I already knew pretty well from reading other sources. This book covers the last 25 years which I was familiar with but these interviews took me much deeper into the material. It details how difficult it was to continue Star Trek after the death of Roddenberry. The people who were in charge of being show runners, writers and directors had to wrestle with the question that bedevils us to this day... what is Star Trek? I remember when TNG ended how surprising it was that they were going straight into

shooting *Generations* without taking a break. The one recurring theme I found after Roddenberry is just how much Paramount (and later CBS) wanted to exploit the Star Trek brand despite repeated warnings that they were going to the well far too often. I know it is popular to trash Rick Berman but it is clear that if Berman refused to go along with Paramount's wishes, they would have fired him and found someone else to do their bidding. Sure, it was great having *DS9* started while *TNG* was still running because I would have watched 10 new Star Trek shows a week being a diehard Trekker. Then we got *Voyager* while *DS9* was still on as the tentpole for the new UPN network. Then, without a break, you get *Enterprise*, which did not fit into the target demographic that UPN was aiming for at that time. The showrunners and writers were exhausted because there had been no break from Star Trek since *TNG* started. It's fascinating to see what people like Braga argued for on *Voyager* and *Enterprise* but was overruled by the network suits at Paramount. Thank the Great Bird they refused to go along with putting a boy band on the show every week. Berman and Braga did the best they could under very trying circumstances. We should be thrilled that they were able to produce a decent show most weeks given the constraints they were under. That is the takeaway from this book for me. It is amazing to see the amount of political wheeling and dealing that went on which put limits on the narrative of *Voyager* and *Enterprise*. I also hated to see that Paramount forced director Stuart Baird into the filming of *Nemesis*. He clearly wasn't a fan of Star Trek, wasn't familiar with *TNG* or previous films and didn't work on focusing on the characters. Den of Geek has a great story on this issue, "Star Trek: *Nemesis* - what went wrong?" that goes into more depth about Baird's failings and what the movie could have been. It was also interesting to read about the attempts to resurrect Star Trek, including a story by *Babylon 5* creator, J. Michael Straczynski. Even an animated series was discussed which would have been really cool. All of that was shut down when JJ Abrams was brought in to reboot Star Trek. It was a pity that Paramount and CBS split the rights to Star Trek. Unlike *Star Wars*, there can be no coordination between the film franchise and the TV/Novel franchise. Imagine if Paramount had consolidated Star Trek under one central authority, It could have rivaled *Star Wars* in terms of multimedia products, i.e., movies, TV series, books, graphic novels, music, websites, etc. What we can take away from this book is despite all of the commercial pressure from Paramount, Star Trek attracted a plethora of talented people who contributed to the success of the franchise. We have 700+ hours of Star Trek episodes to enjoy along with 13 movies. 2017 will see the return of Star Trek to the small screen with Discovery. It will be interesting to see what the 75th Anniversary book will say about the coming 25 years of Star Trek.

I was so excited for this book, but by the end I was so exhausted reading it that relief just rushed over me when I finally finished it. The main flaw is a massive lack of editorial discretion which shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the "oral history" type narrative it attempts to emulate. The authors specifically reference these other types of recent books (done on subjects such as Saturday Night Live, The Food Network, etc.) as their inspiration in gathering these interview clips and presenting them arranged in a narrative fashion. What they failed to glean from those volumes is that once someone makes a statement, sure, group in similar comments by others, but one does not need to each and every interviewee to go into great detail saying the same exact thing. Over and over, through the book, it's almost painful how much of this book is repetition. It could have easily been half the length and done a more effective job. Unfortunately, that highlights the other issues with the book - one, I'd estimate a good 80% of the commentary on the shows is by the writers, specifically some writers over and over again commenting even on things they didn't participate in (Ronald D. Moore in particular should be getting a cut of this book, since he "wrote" so much of it). There are also a number of misplaced quotes from "experts" - such as website runners and such which are generally snarky and add nothing to the narrative. The issue with having so much opinion from the writers is that many were largely disgruntled or unhappy, and hearing the same complaints over and over just was boring and did nothing to further any real understanding of the shows overall. Finally, I might have given the book 3 stars as opposed to 2 if not for the clear fanboy bias - "TNG was too safe, DS9 was nearly God-like in quality, Voyager was garbage" - no objectivity at all - and finally the comments from the actors themselves which are sprinkled throughout. The few actor quotes that exist are highlighted by really petty, super-gossipy things that I really didn't need to know - particularly the stuff involving Voyager and Garret Wang's flappings regarding Kate Mulgrew and Jeri Ryan. Such things would have been more palatable if they had been part of a truly deep look into that series, but here they just are to fill out the brief section of Voyager since the authors apparently had so little interest in it. I really gave this book a chance, and hoped that somehow it would redeem itself by the end, but as I said to start with - I felt relief at finishing, not enlightened or feeling like I had been on any type of positive journey. Instead, it was more like I survived listening to a bunch of largely disgruntled co-workers gathering to rant about a former workplace. Mostly, it made me wish a truly comprehensive look at the shows would be done in this fashion, with much less repetitive quotes from the same groups of people and a larger swath of the experience beyond what happened in the writers rooms.

I thought there was no way this book could be better than the first volume which came out in June

which quickly became the greatest book on Star Trek ever written. I'm embarrassed to say I was wrong. The Next 25 Years weighing in at 300 pages more than the first is even better. Honest, but never mean-spirited, this is the candid story of the relaunch of The Next Generation in the late 80's revealing a voluminous amount of facts I'd never heard before. Chaos on the Bridge was only the tip of the iceberg, in fact. And I was delighted to see the movies as well as Voyager and Enterprise and especially Deep Space Nine get the spotlight as they have rarely been covered in any kind of depth. It is the most honest and real chronology of these series along with the slow erosion of the quality of the franchise. In fact, I enjoyed it so much, I'm now going to get the audiobook to listen to on my commute to work after the holidays. If there's any Achilles Heel to the books, it might be the J.J. Abrams films which will interesting, don't have the kind of honest hindsight and depth that the rest of the films receive. I suspect though in a few years, we might see these films get the same treatment. If you're a fan of any iteration of Star Trek or just someone interested in movies and TV, these are absolutely the books for you. You will NOT regret it.

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