

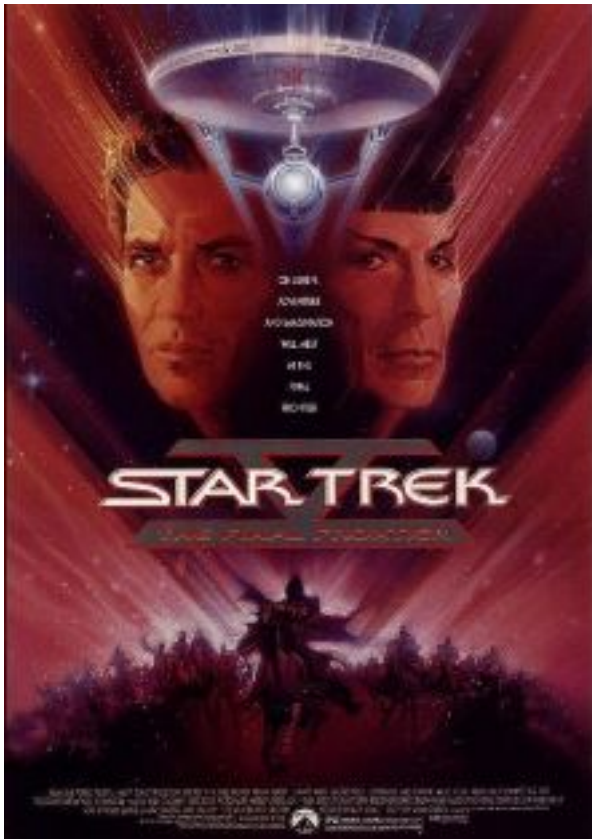
## Not All Treks Are Created Equal: Ranking the ‘Star Trek’ Films

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 8, 2009 - 10:44am

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CHICAGO – With the eleventh (and best) “[Star Trek](#) [8]” movie landing in theaters today, we thought we’d take a look back at the ten-pack that came before, the films that defined the Trek universe (along with the TV incarnations, of course).

The “Star Trek” filmography is wildly varying in quality, stretching the spectrum from beloved sci-fi classic to total disaster. Which one was the worst? Which was the pre-[J.J. Abrams](#) [4] best? Let us guide the way where so many have gone before.



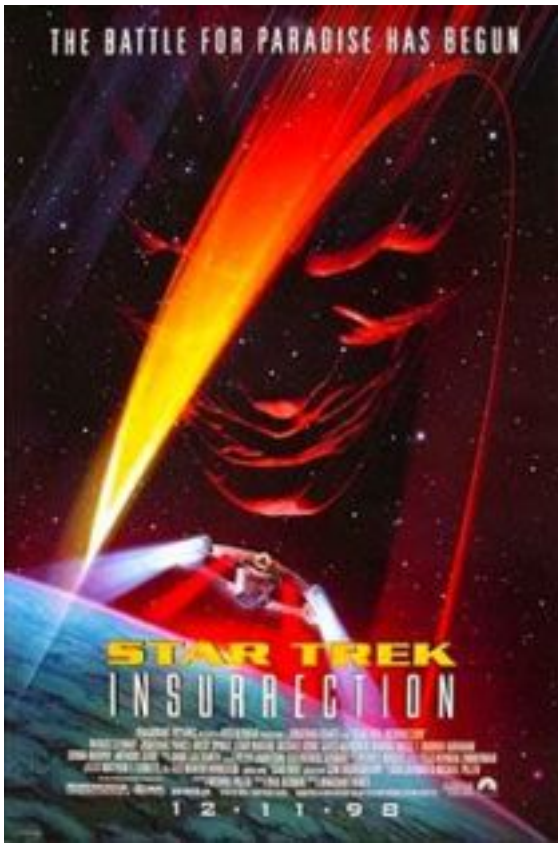
### 10. “Star Trek V: The Final Frontier”

Easily the worst of the Trek films, original series, or Next Generation cast, it’s honestly surprising that the franchise could survive a film this bad. If “The Next Generation” TV series hadn’t injected life back into the solar system of characters that Gene Roddenberry created and the universe was simply film-based at this point, the series probably would have stopped after five films. After the most successful Trek film, the widely-appealing “The Voyage Home,” Trek producers decided to not only get existential and make a movie about Captain Kirk looking for God in outer space but also to let William Shatner direct. Fifth films in a franchise rarely work but few are as disastrous as “The Final Frontier”.



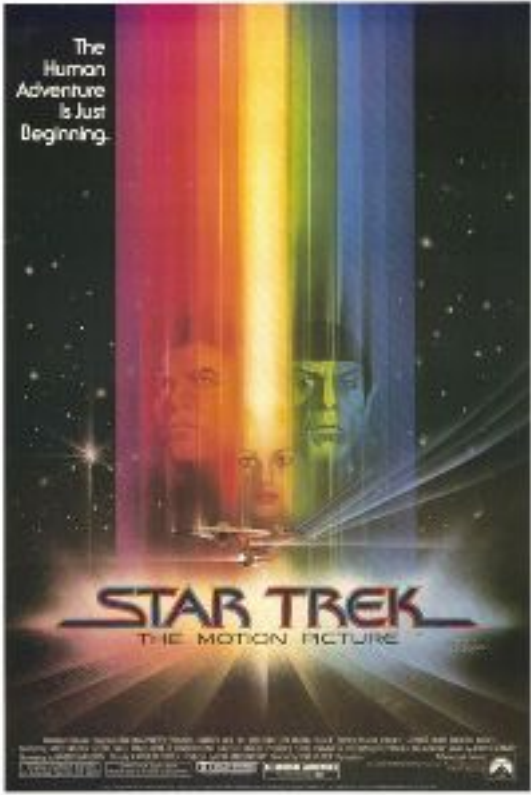
## 9. “Star Trek: Nemesis”

While “The Final Frontier” nearly put a nail in the coffin of the “Star Trek” franchise, “Nemesis” actually closed it shut and poured six feet of dirt on it. The most frustrating thing about the final Next Generation film was how much it made true all of the non-Trekker complaints about the mythology. Overly talky, ploddingly paced, and just plain nonsensical, “Nemesis” is, and I’m sorry to use such a hot-button word Trek fans, the “dorkiest” movie that emerged from Roddenberry’s universe. It was remarkable how clearly “Nemesis” slammed the door on what had been a robust franchise for years. There was no doubt that there would never be another TNG film after “Nemesis”. There were a few decent ideas - bringing back the Romulans and playing with Data’s personality like “First Contact” did - but the film made less than any other Trek outing, even the ‘80s ones. J.J. Abrams’ version will make more in its opening night than this disaster.



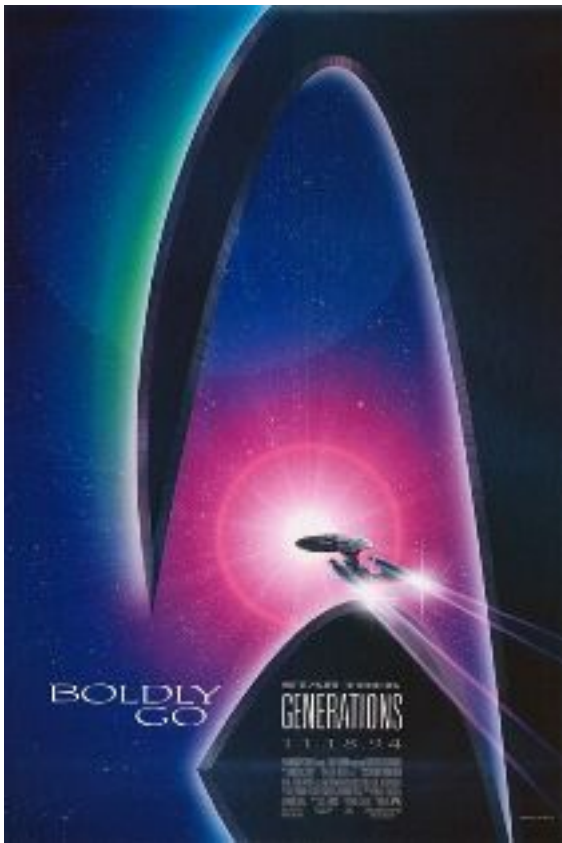
## 8. “Star Trek: Insurrection”

The Next Generation films showed such promise but we could tell something was wrong by the time the ploddingly-paced “Insurrection” showed up. Whoever thought it was a good idea to follow an action film like “First Contact” with a dull, leaden script like the one for “Insurrection” deserves a lot of the blame for the demise of the TNG incarnation of the franchise. Sure, “Nemesis” may have been the final nail in the coffin but “Insurrection” pounded in more than a few on its way in and out of theaters. Of the three truly bad Trek films, it’s only barely the best. Having said that, there’s at least something to like about all of the top seven.



## 7. “Star Trek: The Motion Picture”

The director’s cut of “TMP” may be considered superior to the original, but the film is still deeply flawed in whatever incarnation. Originally planned as a TV pilot and rushed into production, the script for the first “Star Trek” film is a cobbled together mess. And it just looks bad. The confidence that the Trek crew would display in films II-IV, the best streak in the Trek franchise, simply isn’t on display in this one. You can feel the nerves and the uncertainty in every element. And it’s just so shockingly predictable and stunningly dated. You may have loved it when you were a kid, but I dare you to sit through it now. It’s almost impossible to do so without getting drowsy. How forgotten is the original “Star Trek”? Paramount is releasing a Blu-Ray box set under the banner “The Motion Picture Trilogy” next week. I naturally assumed it was the first three films. Nope. They skipped one and just included II-IV. You should too.



## 6. “Star Trek: Generations”

If you think about what “Generations” tried to do - passing the torch from one franchise to the next - a true home run of a film was damn near impossible. It was the kind of project that simply could not make everyone happy. Diehard fans of the original series didn’t give in easily to the idea of handing the reins over to Picard, Data, and the rest of the TNG gang. And the TNG diehards saw the film as more of an obligation, something to get out of the way before their favorite cast could take center stage. With that in mind, “Generations” works better than it should. It’s an entertaining sci-fi film, more memorable for its position as the bridge between the film incarnations than anything else, but not a bad movie on its own merits either.





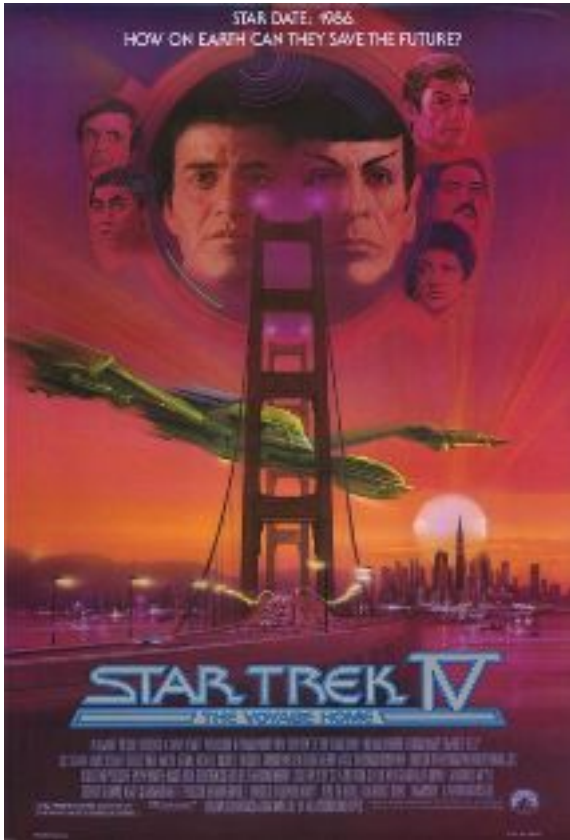
## 5. “Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country”

How good is “The Undiscovered Country”? It made “The Final Frontier” forgivable. Honestly, I think “The Undiscovered Country” is a vastly underrated sci-fi film. Directed by Nicholas Meyer, who not coincidentally worked on two of the most beloved Trek films - “Wrath of Khan” and “The Voyage Home” - “The Undiscovered Country” was co-written by Leonard Nimoy and stands as the final film that will ever feature the original cast. According to some reports, the sixth Trek film was once conceived not unlike Abrams’ reboot, in that it would kick start the franchise with a young cast. That means we would never have had this fitting final epilogue for the original crew and that would have been a travesty. How good is “Undiscovered Country”? It started the whole concept of even-numbered Treks being better than the odd ones.



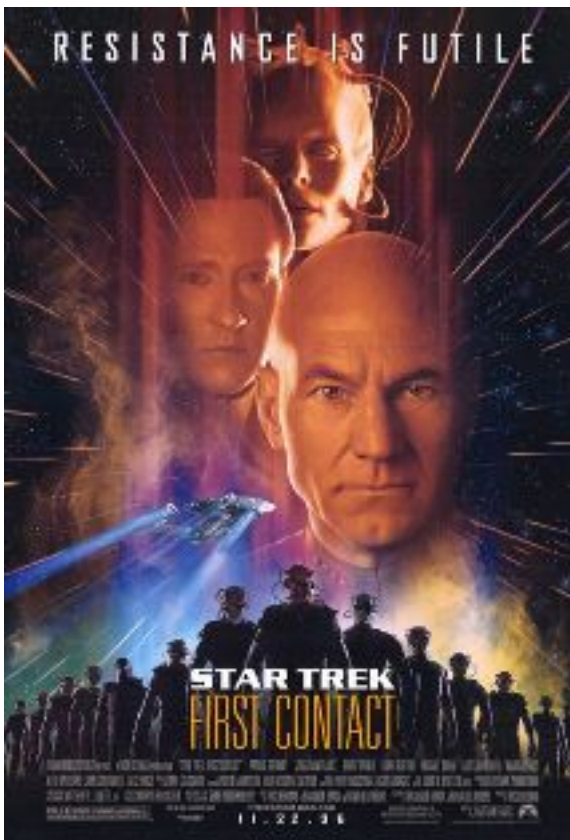
## 4. “Star Trek III: The Search for Spock”

Here’s where things get tricky. Honestly, 2-4 on this list may fluctuate in my mind depending on the day. But I do think the whole even-number concept did a disservice to one of the first Trek movies I fell in love with as a kid and the middle act of the story arc that connects “Khan” and “Voyage Home,” two of the more beloved sci-fi films ever made, Trek or otherwise. Part of the reason I’m more forgiving of “Spock” than other Trekkers is simple - I’m a huge fan of the title character. Yes, Nimoy’s direction is a little too studied, returning the franchise to the more dull pace of the original film, but I think “Spock” is consistent with the ideas of Roddenberry’s original vision, one in which the humanity of the Enterprise crew always took center stage.



### 3. “Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home”

The most financially successful Trek film (until the new one shatters all records) was the family-friendly “The Voyage Home,” a film that I rebelled against as a kid, thinking it wasn’t “cool” enough, but that I recognize is thoroughly enjoyable now. I still think “The Voyage Home” stands out as kind of an unusual sci-fi comedy, more of a fish-out-of-water movie than a Trek film. That’s never what the franchise was for me. But the reason I give in and place “Voyage Home” so high on the list is simple - it made the world of Trek what it is today. Think about it. What if the franchise had gone from “Search for Spock” to something like “The Final Frontier”? Even Abrams wouldn’t have the pull to get a reboot made. “The Voyage Home” is an essential part of the foundation of the entire franchise. Maybe the most essential.



### 2. “Star Trek: First Contact”

Borg! Easily the best Next Generation Trek film is also quite simply one of the best sci-fi movies of the '90s. “First Contact” is an expertly paced action movie, a film that works for fans of TNG, fans of the original, and movie goers who hadn’t heard of either. Second only to “Voyage Home” in terms of box office, “First Contact” features a great villainous turn by Alice Krige as the Borg Queen and allows for all of the personalities of the TNG crew to take a turn in the spotlight, but none more than the beloved Data, who gets one of his most memorable story arcs, TV, or film.



1. “Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan”

What do the top two “Star Trek” films of all time have in common? Memorable villains. The Borg Queen and the legendary Khan proved that while the crew on the bridge of the Enterprise must be a crucial part of any Trek film, they need a worthy adversary. And they got one in Khan, one of the most referenced and beloved sci-fi films ever made. “Wrath of Khan” would go on to influence science fiction for years to come and you can see its fingerprints all over Abrams’ vision. With a dark edge and breakneck pace, “Wrath of Khan” is still converting Trek virgins into diehard fans around the world.

(All posters courtesy of Paramount).



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