

TNG reunion injects a little fun into Star Trek: Picard's uneven final season

Enlarge / Jonathan Frakes is my dad.

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Few involved in the making or watching of 2002's *Star Trek Nemesis* would say that it was a fantastic send-off for the beloved characters of *The Next Generation*. Over seven seasons, *TNG* became one of *Trek*'s most nuanced and consistent entries (though still one that was capable of producing terrible, silly, and just plain weird episodes). But *Nemesis* is a flat action movie defined by thin characterization, a cheesy one-note villain, and distracting plot contrivances, and it did so poorly (\$67 million on a \$60 million budget, in a time before "maybe it will make a lot of money in China" was a thing) that it foreclosed any possibility of another sequel. The cast and those characters, the thinking generally went, deserved better closure.

Star Trek: Picard has been the *TNG* continuation you'd get if you wished for a *TNG* sequel on a monkey's paw. The first two seasons made only intermittent use of any non-Picard characters, and the new characters were either annoying or bland or both. The show's creative staff uses "convoluted twists" as a stand-in for clear and interesting storytelling.

It's a show strictly for die-hard *Trek* completists, and it's easily the worst of the five *Trek* shows in active production as of this writing.

The show's third and final season has been pitched as a true *TNG* reunion, and if nothing else, it's nice to see the clear affection these performers still have for one another. But *Picard* is still *Picard*, and many of the characters and plot points in the season so far (we've seen the first six episodes of a planned 10, though this piece will only refer to specific events from the season premiere and the trailers) are eerily reminiscent of the ones that made *Nemesis* so unsatisfying.

The movie version of *TNG*