

Star Trek's next exploration may be into lesbianism

Sources at the offices of *Star Trek: Voyager* producers Jeri Taylor, Richard Berman and Michael Pillar have revealed that the new Borg character played by actress Jeri Ryan (last seen in *Dark Skies*) will eventually be revealed as a lesbian, making her the first gay character to appear on the series.

"Although I'll certainly be thrilled if this happens, we are taking a cautious wait-and-see attitude," said Tim Perkins, director of the *Voyager* Visibility Project, a 300-member online group that has been lobbying the producers to live up to Gene Roddenberry's 1991 announcement that he would be adding gay and lesbian characters to the cast of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Roddenberry, whose announcement in the gay newsmagazine *The Advocate* was largely ignored by mainstream press, died several months later of a heart attack.

"No gay or lesbian crew member ever appeared on any iteration of *Star Trek* after *Gene* died, not *The Next Generation*, not *Deep Space Nine*, not *Voyager*," Perkins stated. "There have been constant rumors that a gay or lesbian character was about to be added, including Tasha Yar, Ro Laren, Data, Geordi, B'Ellana Torres, Harry Kim and Kira Nerys, but none has ever materialized. Our hopes — and the producers'

credibility — have been stretched to their limits."

Perkins claimed that one of his Los Angeles members was recently told by a member of the *Voyager* production staff that the "Seven of Nine" character introduced in the season premiere will finally fulfill Roddenberry's promise, being the first and most visible of several gay and lesbian crewmembers. However, the creative team made a calculated decision not to publicize the character's sexuality until the relevant episodes air. Even then, the attitude will be matter-of-fact.

The Seven of Nine character is a human who was assimilated by the Borg at age 5. She has minimal memories of her childhood and no human identity. She has spent 20 years of her life as a sexless Borg drone, controlled by the collective mind.

When separated from the hive on board *Voyager*, Captain Janeway decides to try to "de-assimilate" Seven of Nine and help her regain her humanity. The holographic doctor begins to tinker with restoring her human appearance, removing the mechanical prosthetics the Borg graft onto their biological subjects. As the process proceeds, she begins to be revealed as a lushly beautiful human female.

However, Seven of Nine has some problems about being disconnected from the Borg and doesn't necessarily want to "learn" to be human. She is a blank slate who has to adjust to having a free will, to having individual reactions to stimuli, to having sexual feelings. She has no idea how to relate to humans.

This will lead to a number of miscues and misunderstandings. In fact, the characters of the holographic Doctor and Seven of Nine will have the most in common in that they are both technological creatures in the process of becoming human. They are both on a journey.

It will be very clear from the beginning that Seven of Nine has no concept of sexual pleasure or gender or monogamous relationships or sexual guilt. She will experiment with discovering her own body and she will discover that her body and her mind respond overwhelmingly to other women. This will be a part of her humanity that she and no other member of the crew will consider unusual or subject to change.

"After Ellen DeGeneres and her character came out on national television, it seems there are more lesbian and gay characters than ever before," said Perkins. "The producers of *Trek* have delayed so long that the addition of this

character may be anti-climatic. However, the fact that she exists in a future where there is total acceptance of her orientation allows the character to develop and act in ways that a gay or lesbian character in a comedy or drama set in today's society could not. This character could still make history for *Trek*, although at this point I personally think a male character would have more impact.

"At first I was leery about the idea of the 'evolving' realization of sexuality, but Seven of Nine literally has no sexual experience. The fact that she realizes she is a lesbian means that she has to interact with at least one female crewmember who identifies herself as a lesbian — and that's good news. I can't wait to meet the gay couple in security who become their best friends."

Perkins assured that he and his organization will continue to monitor the program to see whether or not Seven of Nine develops as their source has informed them. In the meantime, the *Voyager* Visibility Project online petition asking the producers to add an ongoing gay or lesbian character to *Star Trek* will continue to be forwarded to the producers as web surfers sign it. The website and petition can be found at <http://www.gaytrek.com>. ▼

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by DJ Instant T
Q-Notes Staff

1. Say A Little Prayer - Diana King (Work)
2. Free - Ultra Naté (Strictly Rhythm)
3. You're Not Alone - Olive (RCA)
4. Something Goin' On - Todd Terry feat. Martha Wash & Jocelyn Brown (Manifesto [UK Import])
5. Mi Gente Latina - Robi Rob's Club World (Columbia)
6. Mo Money, Mo Problems - Notorious B.I.G. (Bad Boy)
7. Things Just Ain't The Same - Deborah Cox (Arista)
8. Shake Your Body Down - Full Intention (Downtown [Italian Import])
9. Clouds - The Source (XL [UK Import])
10. Where Can I Find Love - Livin' Joy (MCA [UK Import])
11. Peace Train - Dolly Parton (Flip It)
12. Love From Above - Myndy K. (Grand Slam)
13. Alright - Jamiroquai (Work)
14. Satisfaction Guaranteed - Todd Terry (Logic)
15. The Way - Funky Green Dogs (Twisted)
16. Spin Spin Sugar - Livin' Joy (Virgin)
17. Rip Groove - Double 99 (Satellite [UK Import])
18. Put Your Faith In Me - Alison Limmerick (X-es [UK Import])
19. Around The World - Daft Punk (Virgin)
20. Everything - Mary J. Blige (MCA [UK Import]) ▼

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