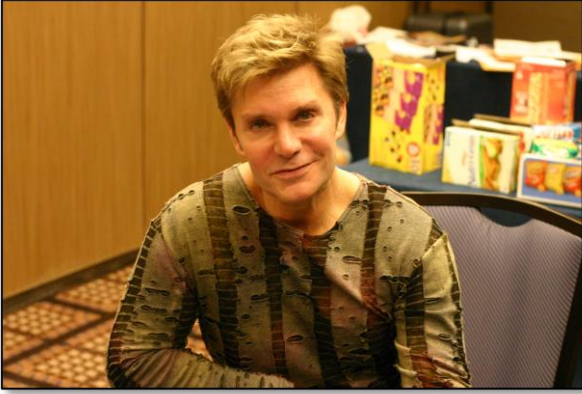


# Captain Kirk Returns As a Gospel Singing Fullmetal Alchemist

An interview with actor Vic Mignogna

By Robert Delwood



Actor Vic Mignogna at Con Alt Delete in Chicago.

It isn't enough that Vic Mignogna is multi-talented. Up until now, he's had a following in the anime community with hits such as Fullmetal Alchemist's Edward Elric, and Vega in Street Fighter II V. But since 2013, he's widened his scope and is known for his Captain Kirk in the Web series *Star Trek Continues* (STC).

Several things strike you about Mignogna. First, he does have an uncanny resemblance to the original Kirk, William Shatner. Mignogna is even a veteran Captain Kirk, he's played him once already in another series.

Second, he's a passionate Star Trek: The Original series (ST:TOS) fan. He became fascinated with it since he first saw the show in the early 1970s, missing the original broadcasts by only months. Starting at ten years old, he crafted communicators from spare parts around the house. He learned to sew because he wanted the Enterprise's insignia on his jacket, but his mother wouldn't indulge him. His interest came with a price. He had to later re-sew that insignia on the inside of that jacket to avoid being made fun of by classmates. Star Trek had a deeper meaning, too. His parents divorced in the late 60s, less common at that time, and in Shatner's Kirk he saw a father figure. He was a strong decisive authority and Mignogna pretended to be guided by him, providing the structure he wanted. Together, it's that passion that drives him, but more on that later. Just playing Kirk isn't what Mignogna is out for. His drive takes geekiness and fandom to new levels.

He wants to tell a story. STC plans to be an 11 episode series, literally continuing where the original series left off. He originally conceived the series as a continuation of specific episodes. The first show, for example, "Pilgrim Of Eternity" picks up the ST:TOS' "Who Mourns for Adonais?," even recasting Michael Forest as Apollo. However, STC moved the scope to the entire series. Remember, it was supposed to be an infamously five year mission, but the TV series ended abruptly after three seasons, without any resolution. Mignogna wants to add that resolution. Dedicated fans, including Mignogna, noticed however, the star dates from William Shatner's Kirk indicated they were into their fourth year. When we next see the Enterprise in 1979's *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, Kirk is an admiral at a desk job, the Enterprise is being repaired in space dock, and, this may seem like a minor detail to some, the insignia for Star Fleet changed to resemble the Enterprise's insignia. Mignogna wants to fill those back stories. Kirk is clearly not suited for a staff position, so why did he take it? What happened to the Enterprise to be significantly overhauled like that? The insignia change is actually an important clue. In the ST:TOS creator's Gene Roddenberry's notes, he comments that the Enterprise is the last of the original nine Constitution class ships, and the insignia change was made to honor that.

He wants to tell that story his way. And details are important to him. STC re-created many of original sets in impressive detail. The scripts are in the same style as the original, including the campy, now iconic over-acted dialog Shatner used. He doesn't use any of the original cast, although Chris Doohan plays chief engineer Montgomery Scott, best known as Scotty, who is the son of the ST:TOS' James Doohan. He comes complete with the Scottish accent, and the nipping sense of humor.

Mignogna's involvement doesn't end with that. He also writes the music, the script, the story, and even builds the sets. "The credits list several people in those roles, and the show couldn't be done without them. But make no mistake, this is my show

and I have a hand in every aspect," Mignogna explains. "There have been other Star Trek fan shows, but I didn't like the way those stories were being told, or the amateur production values, so I decided to do it my way." And that he does. He owns the production company, is executive producer, and uses his range of talents in every aspect. The show is well financed and in keeping the agreement with ST:TOS owner CBS, he makes no profit on the series, instead reinvesting all the money back into the shows.

His talents are considerable and well honed, too. Before high school, he made backyard films of StarTrek. "Those films were horrible, but I enjoyed them, and I like doing that, even if no one else did." He followed his passions, and to him that's all that matters. The experience and those passions inspired him to become a film major in college, with an interest for TV and science fiction. He combined those with acting and voice actin. He is also a musician and composer. This spills over with his church involvement in Houston, being a song leader and singer. All while arranging and producing his own shows. He doesn't see himself as one skill or another, such as just an actor, or just a filmmaker. "My career is a pie chart with each skill being a slice. The size of the slices may change from month to month, but each one is always there," clarifying those points.

Finally, the word "passion" has to be used thoroughly in any description of Mignogna. It's the passion or the love of doing things that drives him. He emphatically prescribes it for everyone. "Do what you feel is unique to you and don't worry about how others see you," he explains. "You never know where anything will lead, either now or ten years from now. So do whatever is fun for you." This is something he believes. His interests weren't always popular, and he recounts being bullied in middle school for his Star Trek interests. His perseverance paid off. While fame isn't a goal for him, he recalls being recognized once on a plane by an eight year old. "Captain Kirk!," the boy proclaimed, and drew the attention of all the passengers. He remains humble. "I don't take anything I do for granted. They're all just gifts granted to me by God." He wants to give back to society by inspiring others the way he had been inspired by others. "Whatever you do, make the best you can make."



*Mignogna in a question and answer session.*