

FEATURE

Borg battle tops 'turbo' quest

NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting. Each review includes the USCC classification and the rating of the Motion Picture Association of America.

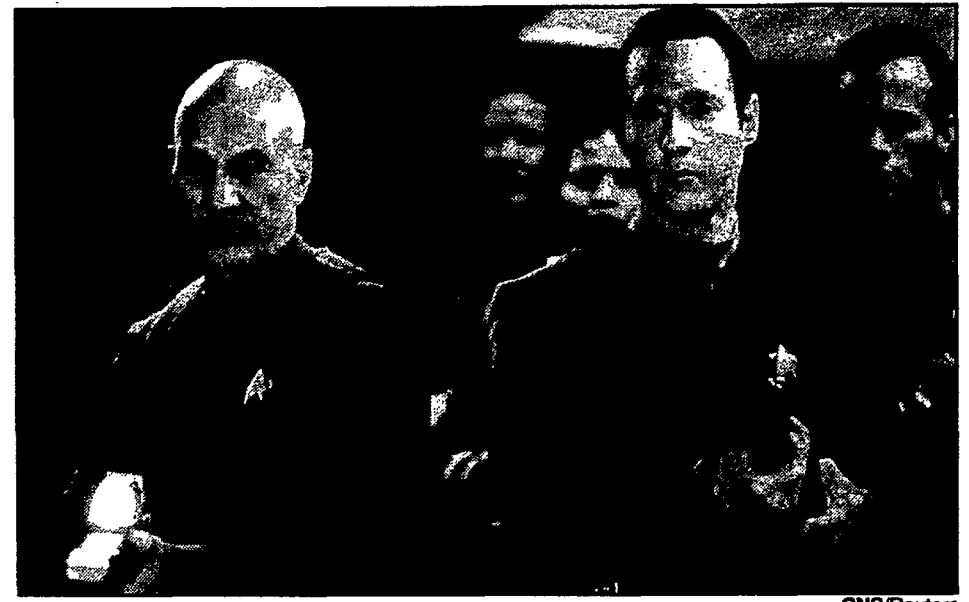
Jingle All the Way

Macho-themed comedy set on Christmas Eve as a harried dad (Arnold Schwarzenegger) and a frantic postman (Sinbad) chase around the city, desperate to get the last Turbo Man doll each has promised his son. Director Brian Levant's extended sitcom substitutes rudely aggressive behavior for genuine humor in a contrived series of tiresome skirmishes. Frequent slapstick violence and fleeting sexual innuendo. The USCC classifica-

tion is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Star Trek: First Contact

Headed by its bold captain (Patrick Stewart), the 24th-century Starship Enterprise battles an on-board invasion by killer aliens while racing back to the year 2063, where a crisis on planet Earth could terminate humankind. Director Jonathan Frakes weaves together two separate stories for an entertaining tale of old-fashioned adventure jazzed up with futuristic visuals. Some stylized violence and fleeting sexual innuendo. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPA rating is PG-13 — parents are cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.



CNS/Reuters
Patrick Stewart as Capt. Jean Luc Picard (left) and Brent Spiner as Lt. Cmdr. Data search the Enterprise for Borg Invaders in "Star Trek: First Contact."

Author calls for objectivity, apologetics to counter new movements

Understanding New Religious Movements, by Jesuit Father John Saliba. Eerdmans Publishing (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1996). 240 pp., \$18.00.

Reviewed by William Droel
Catholic News Service

We want to respect religious freedom. We want to protect innocent young people from harmful influences. When it comes to cults or new religious movements, however, those two goods are sometimes in conflict on the college campus, in a court of law, in a pastor's office and in a family.

A great deal of the research, writing and publicity about cults has been generated by parents and organizations that have had bad experiences. Thus, says Jesuit Father John Saliba in *Understanding New Religious Movements*, public responses are overwhelmingly negative. His book is an effort to present an impartial picture

of what is actually happening. Father Saliba, who developed this study for the Vatican, uses the term new religious movements because the word cult is almost automatically associated with the worst examples.

He insists that the new religious movements are "not conducive to sweeping generalizations." Father Saliba — without accepting their truth claims — finds some positive things in the movements. At the present time, he concludes, these movements "do not justify a fearful or belligerent reaction. ... They are more of a challenge than a threat."

Careful not to generalize, he does offset the notion that unsuspecting young adults are aggressively recruited into cults. More likely, he reports, the young person is a religious seeker who freely joins the



BOOK REVIEW

religious movement. The young person is not comfortable in his or her own family, even though that family by all appearances seems intact. As with communes, the young person will stay with the religious movement for about two years, using the experience as a transition. The young person attracted to these movements is in the midst of an identity crisis, but falls "within the normal psychological range."

Father Saliba does not deny that some groups violate the religious freedom of young people. Nor does he imply that all religious teachings are relative. Some teachings in the new movement are repugnant to Christians. In fact, he says, the old practice of apologetics is, in some cases, a very effective response to the new religious movements. He mentions some re-

sources specifically geared to counter scriptural distortions.

Nonetheless, in dealing with cults he advises against anything that resembles a crusade. That approach, he says, "might have profound and undesirable repercussions on both society and traditional religions."

Some college administrators and some of my colleagues in campus ministry will disagree with Father Saliba's balanced approach. The complexity of the issue, I believe, warrants more tolerance toward new religious movements and, at the same time, more assertiveness about the truth of Christianity as it is understood by Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, both mainline and evangelical.

Droel, a former Rochester resident, is an instructor and campus minister at Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills, Ill.

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