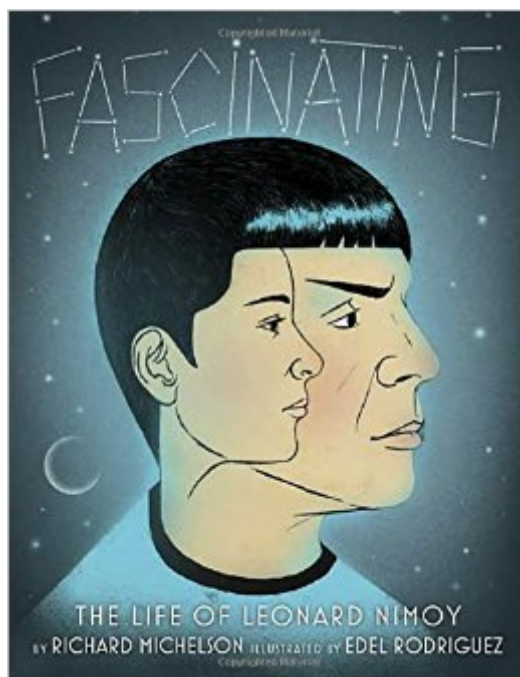


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Fascinating: The Life Of Leonard Nimoy



Synopsis

A moving biography of the late Leonard Nimoy, the iconic Spock from Star Trek, whose story exemplifies the American experience and the power of pursuing your dreams. "Once there was a boy named Leonard who loved to sing and to act. His parents were immigrants who felt like aliens in America, and certainly didn't understand Leonard's drive to perform. "Learn to play the accordion," his father told him. "Actors starve, but at least musicians can eke out a living." But Leonard reached for the stars . . . and caught them. He moved to Hollywood, where he took acting lessons, and drove a taxi and took every role he could get. He worked hard, learned his lines, showed up on time, and studied his craft. Until one day he was offered the role of an alien science officer on a new TV show called Star Trek. Leonard knew what it felt like to be an alien. But did he want the role? Fascinating is the story of how one boy followed his dreams to become one of the most beloved figures of our time."In Leonard's profound absence "it is so lucky that his dear friend Richard Michelson has thought to bring us this richly illustrated account of his inspiring life. Together with Edel Rodriguez they beautifully capture some of the highlights of Leonard's journey from immigrants' son in Boston's west end "to one of the most iconic and recognizable characters in the world." Zachary Quinto

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fascinating: The Life of Leonard Nimoy by Richard Michelson, illustrated by Edel Rodriguez Review

by Judy Polan, Senior EditorMadforModBlog.comThird-grader Lenny Nimoy nervously peeks through the curtain of his school's little theater, watching an audience gather. He has been recruited quite suddenly to open the night's talent show with his rendition of "God Bless America", after the school's social director Mr. Chalfin had heard his resonant voice belting out the Shema prayer at synagogue. As he is nudged on to the stage, he is delighted to see that front-row seats had been reserved for his proud parents. Mr. Chalfin presciently bends down and whispers to him "Reach for the stars!", and a career is born. Feeling befuddled was not a new sensation for Lenny. When his Yiddish-speaking Russian Jewish immigrant parents had arrived in Boston, their passports had been stamped "alien", a perfect description of how they felt. They took classes at a settlement house to learn how to be "more American": how to cook hot dogs, how to brush their teeth with a toothbrush instead of a rag. Nimoy, like so many children of immigrant families, spent much of his life working to overcome the psychic stigma of feeling alien. Yet, ironically, his acclaimed portrayal of the unflappable Mr. Spock on Star Trek eventually brought him back full circle. He fully inhabited a character whose main trait was his "otherness". Richard Michelson's new book *The Life of Leonard Nimoy*, is a loving, gentle recounting of a remarkable, richly-lived life. Michelson seamlessly and with great warmth guides the reader through the many incarnations of the life of the man who was to become his dear friend and father-figure, starting with his stint as a newspaper boy on Beacon Hill in Boston. Through this work, Nimoy kept up with current events and saved enough money to buy his first camera, a Kodak Bellows. The observational skills he honed through his early experiments with photography served him well later in his life as an actor and director; he felt that his pictures exposed people's souls. Leonard was indeed becoming more and more American, less "alien". He loved performing, and by the time he was seventeen decided that he was meant to be an actor. A kind-hearted priest from the neighborhood spotted his talent and offered him a scholarship for the Boston College summer theater program. By the end of that season, Nimoy was eager to follow his dreams and travel to Hollywood. To raise money for train fare, he took a job in 1949 as a door-to-door Electrolux vacuum cleaner salesman, an occupation for which he showed surprisingly little promise. Soon he discovered that while he couldn't really be a successful salesman, he could "act" the part of one quite effectively. All aboard for California! Michelson colorfully traces Nimoy's next thirteen years, during which he worked as a movie theater usher, a soda jerk, and a cab driver. (One of his passengers was a young congressman from Boston "yes, JFK" who urged him not to give up on his dreams.) He acted on numerous television shows, opened a teaching studio, and

married and had two children. His big career break came, of course, when he was offered the role of the super-logical "alien science officer" Spock on Star Trek's Enterprise starship. Though to an outside observer, the role of Mr. Spock would seem tailor-made for Nimoy, Michelson says that the decision to take it "was not a no-brainer" at the time. It was going to require that he wear what the author describes as "pointy ears and a silly haircut. What if the audience made fun of him, and his career was ruined? Eventually, Spock-like logic prevailed, and Nimoy decided to take the plunge. Rather than being laughed at, he was widely admired for his character's calm core, commitment to justice, and ongoing efforts to convince everyone that it made sense to live peacefully. And the Spock haircut, far from being a laughingstock, became all the rage, aided in no small measure by the fact that Max Nimoy (his father) was a barber. After a wildly successful, multi-award-winning career as a performer and director in films and on television, as well as being a recording artist and poet, Nimoy decided to turn his attention back to one of his first artistic loves, photography. It is here that his life intersected with that of the book's author, who is proprietor of the highly regarded R. Michelson Galleries in Northampton, MA. The two men found that they were very much in tune artistically, personally and professionally. Also, they were such look-alikes, that they were often assumed to be father and son, adding an element of hilarity to their close friendship. R. Michelson Galleries mounted several shows of Nimoy's photographs, some of them quite controversial. The Shekhina Project (2002) "an exhibition exploring the feminine aspect of God that included some nudity" and The Full Body Project (2007), which brought confident large woman out of the shadows, drew particular ire from some critics. Throughout his wide-ranging career, Nimoy never abandoned his pride in his Jewish origins or his deeply-rooted love of the Yiddish language. In his later years, he hired a tutor to speak Yiddish with him, just for the joy of it. He was also a major contributor to the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, MA. He happily acknowledged that the universally recognized Vulcan salute he created for Star Trek had its genesis in the hand position used during the biblical priestly blessing, performed with high drama in synagogue services. (Congregants were supposed to close their eyes when this blessing was being given, so as not to be dazzled by the holy presence, but once again, Nimoy peeked.) Illustrations by Cuban-American artist Edel Rodriguez "currently much in the news for his droll Time magazine cover depicting Donald Trump's Velveeta-colored face melting" harmonize with and enhance the magical feeling of the book, never intruding on but always enhancing the text. Richard Michelson, himself a renaissance man (author, speaker, gallerist, mentor to emerging artists) is to be heartily applauded for focusing not on Mr. Nimoy's celebrity, but on his humanity and inner spirit

“one of generosity, kindness, humor, curiosity and artistry. As a friend of mine (a celebrated musician himself) once said to me ‘I’m not interested in people who are famous, I’m interested in people who DO something.’ Now THAT’s fascinating. Judy Polan, Arts & design writer Blogmeister[...]

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