

WILLIAM SHATNER SHATNER RULES!

HUSTLER, THE FINAL FRONTIER: AN EXCLUSIVE Q&A WITH THE CAPTAIN OF THE STARSHIP ENTERPRISE.

There is only one William Shatner: the Canadian-born actor, author, singer, animal activist, poet and Priceline pitchman. In his 50-plus-year career, Shatner has portrayed a myriad of memorable characters, including Bob Wilson (*Twilight Zone*), TV cop T.J. Hooker, Denny Crane (*The Practice*, *Boston Legal*), Dr. Edison Milford Goodson III (*\$#! My Dad Says*) and, of course, *Star Trek*'s Captain James T. Kirk.

Shatner beamed down to planet HUSTLER for this exclusive sitdown with Arts & Entertainment Editor Keith Valcourt. The showbiz icon discussed everything from the cult of *Star Trek* and his love of horses to his numerous upcoming projects and the future of mankind. Heady stuff indeed.

HUSTLER: How does it feel to be an icon?

WILLIAM SHATNER: I don't know what the term *icon* means. It could mean you're easily moved by a [computer] mouse. It could mean you're held up as some kind of object to people. I don't know what that object is.

We're using it in the context of larger-than-life and legendary.

If you're asking permission to call me an icon, you have my permission. If you're asking me to comment on it, then I don't know how to comment on what people think of me.

You are always working, but you seem especially prolific right now with a CD, DVD and book. What triggered this spurt of creativity?

A lot of things. The book [*Shatner Rules: Your Guide to Understanding the Shatnerverse and the World at Large*] and record [*Seeking Major Tom*] are out.

There is a new electronic game coming that we are working on right now. There is a Facebook game show that is close to fruition. I have another documentary called *Fanatics* that is being edited right now.

The documentary *The Captains* is now on DVD. Then there are

some new interview shows about crime that we're doing for A&E. We're using the same technique we used for my show *Aftermath*, which was on the Biography Channel. But more towards criminals.

Do you ever take time off?

This morning I went to my doctor to get the results of my blood work. It was fantastic. He had prescribed a thing, and it resulted in enormous improvement in all my numbers. I then drove from there to where I ride horses in Moorpark [an L.A. suburb] and rode my horse for two hours. I then drove down here for this interview. From here I'm going to my office to do something for the Zakk Wylde roast, where his wife will crawl out from under my desk. Then I have a meeting with a cable company called Epics about our next venture.

Still sounds like a lot of work.

The riding was leisure, as was the doctor visit.

How can a trip to your doctor be a leisure activity?

Because I got good news. Look at what that does for your blood pressure. "You do not have cancer, Mr. Shatner." It's a feeling of total relaxation there.

Horses are your passion. When did you start riding?

I probably was a teenager—prepubescent or getting the pubes. I'm not quite sure. Somewhere around that time I got on a horse. Almost by accident. There was a rental stable near our house. I got on a horse and was galloping around. Then my parents turned up. My mom asked, "When did you learn how to ride?" That was the first time I had ever been on a horse. I must have had a gift of some kind. Horses are expensive. I spent a couple of years swabbing out stables in order to ride a rental horse. Then I stopped until many many years later, when I was able to put some money together to buy a horse.

Around the 1970s, I bought some land, ran one horse and then discovered, much to my chagrin, that horses are like Lay's potato chips. You can't just have only one.

How many horses do you currently own?

I'm not sure because they multiply. Horses have horses, and then those horses have horses. What really matters is that I compete regularly in three different disciplines of riding. One is called reining, which is conducted at one of the horse shows I compete in. It's my own: the Hollywood Charity Horse Show. That's a very strict and precise discipline.

In Kentucky, my wife and I compete on American Saddlebreds (or show horses) and Standardbreds (or trotting horses). I compete in a trotting competition. I've won world championships in some of them.

Tell us about *Shatner Rules*.

Well, it's up-to-date. It's the latest book. What I mean is the anecdotes I tell—upon which I draw some conclusions—are very fresh. Not something I thought of years ago. They are happening now.

Does writing come easily to you?

I find the kick, as you must find, is finding the right word for the right moment.

What are some of "Shatner's Rules"?

"Do your due diligence for an interview" could be a rule. "At a certain age, make sure you get out of bed" and "one foot in front of the other" are good. "Don't take no for an answer."

When hosting your *Raw Nerve* interview show, you got a lot of praise for asking questions no one would ask. What is the one question that no one but you would dare ask William Shatner?

I keep that question buried deep in my cerebellum somewhere between my ego and my id.

Who was your favorite interview guest on *Raw Nerve*?

I really can't choose because everybody that I talked to exhibited some characteristic that was astonishing. They made me pull back and think how wonderful it was that they allowed themselves to be open. I had one personality contact me after the interview and say, "I think I said too much. Can you hold that story?" I took it out. I'm not looking for the tabloid story. Maybe that's why I can ask questions that others can't.

Do you have any interview subjects in mind for the new A&E crime show?

Maybe we can talk to someone who took part in the crime. We're going to be doing crimes, but I'm not sure which ones. I hope to be able to talk to people involved with the crimes and explore their psyche in relation to the crime. I did get a scoop with John Lee Malvo [a/k/a Lee Boyd Malvo], the young guy who was arrested with John Muhammad in the [2002] D.C. sniper case. We waited every Tuesday and Thursday from 4 to 6 p.m. Waited by the phone with a camera, lights and a microphone for him to call because he said he would. Two months. On the last day before deadline, we lucked out. He called. I did a 20-minute interview. At the end, when the computer voice said, "You have 20 seconds," I was able to ask, "Do you think God will forgive you?" He said, "If I can forgive myself." Then we were out of time. How interesting it was for me to explore why bizarre behavior is what it is.

Did you select the songs to cover on your CD *Seeking Major Tom*?

Yes and no. The label wanted me to do an album. They handed me some songs that were all sci-fi. I didn't want to do that, but I did want to take another shot at doing a record. Going



through the lyrics, I discovered that there are at least half a dozen songs about Major Tom. First song they handed me was "Space Oddity" [David Bowie].

All these different lyricists had selected Major Tom as their subject. Who would have known? I came up with the idea of tracking what happened to Major Tom when he stepped out of the capsule. Then we had to choose a number of songs that follow the arc of what I thought would happen. He leaves the capsule enthusiastic, walks on the moon and finally ends up in Hell with Iron Man.

Is singing your second-favorite passion after horses?

What I'm doing there is an offshoot of the rhythm and melody of the iambic pentameter of poetry, which I love. I used to do poetry shows. It stems from my love of poetry and having a Shakespearean background—the love of words and their musicality. When a lyric is really good, all that is there even without the melody. Then if an instrument will support me with the melodic line, it is an interesting combination. *Seeking Major Tom* is, in essence, a poetry album. As was the first album I did, *Transformed Man*, which was mocked in some places.

The *Captains* DVD features your interviews with former *Star Trek* commanders. We know who the greatest captain was, but who would you rank as the second-greatest?

I appreciate your saying that. I knew Patrick Stewart a little bit. The others I did not know at all. In the course of the interviews, I saw a depth

and interesting facets of these people—both as actors and individuals. They each bring something that's different and unique. We all have similar traits and very dissimilar traits. These men and women are extraordinary human beings. You can't say one is better than the other. I can't choose between Patrick Stewart—this lyrical Shakespearean actor—and Scott Bakula, an American musical actor. Look at that difference. They bring their own being to that role.

Is there one characteristic that all five Enterprise captains share?

Their dedication to being an actor to the harm and destruction of their personal life.

Thanks to *Star Trek*, you've been involved in a lot of space projects. Are you fascinated by the cosmos?

The mystery of life and the mystery of existence are the larger picture. What's going on out in the universe is so beyond our imagination. We touch on it with our instruments like the Hubble Telescope but only ever so slightly. We can't even imagine how many things exist out there that we haven't even thought of yet, like the idea of multiple universes. We think that the universe is round and that it's expanding, but it doesn't have to be! If only we'd let ourselves imagine what is out there without limiting ourselves to our poverty-stricken way of thinking. But that's all we know. We are amazed and confounded and baffled and drawn to the mystery of what is out there.

Are people afraid of what's conceivably out there?

We fear change. Things are changing all the time. The world is changing so quickly that you, as a young man, will have to change how you live in a vast way. Glaciers are melting 20 times faster than expected! Things are going to change so drastically. You thought it's going to be your children's children. It's not. Stars and universes are changing on a grand scale. Comets are whizzing by, near-misses. People are clinging to what is here and now because tomorrow is fearful. We have to fight that, adjust and change with the change.

We want to ask you a couple of questions about *Star Trek*. Did you ever imagine—

No! The answer to all questions about *Star Trek* is no! Yes. Leonard Nimoy. But only once. *(Laughs.)*

Why has *Star Trek* generated such a long-lasting, universal appeal?

Trekkies, Trekkors, Trekkettes—whatever you call them—are participating in cultural myth. *Star Trek* is the mythology of today. Every culture has needed and used mythology. The Greeks, the Romans, every culture has their mythology. *Star Trek* offers you the mythology that we will adjust to change. That the technology that got us into this mess will get us out of this mess. That life sustains.

Star Trek offers you heroes in the same way. In the end, for these fans, by putting on the costumes and makeup, they are participating in a mythology that makes them feel better. People on the sidelines wonder what these fools are doing. Fans who meet and converse and trade information [at *Star Trek* conventions] feel better about having been there. That's what Trekkies are doing. And that's what *Star Trek* is.

What is the secret to your success?

My wife. Elizabeth is the secret to my success—and, incidentally, so is vigor. Health is huge. Acting takes a lot of energy. What you need to be a performer is joy and energy.

We'd ask you another *Star Trek* question, but the answer would probably be—

No! The answer is no! Yes.

And Leonard Nimoy?

But only once. *(Laughs.)* 🗣️