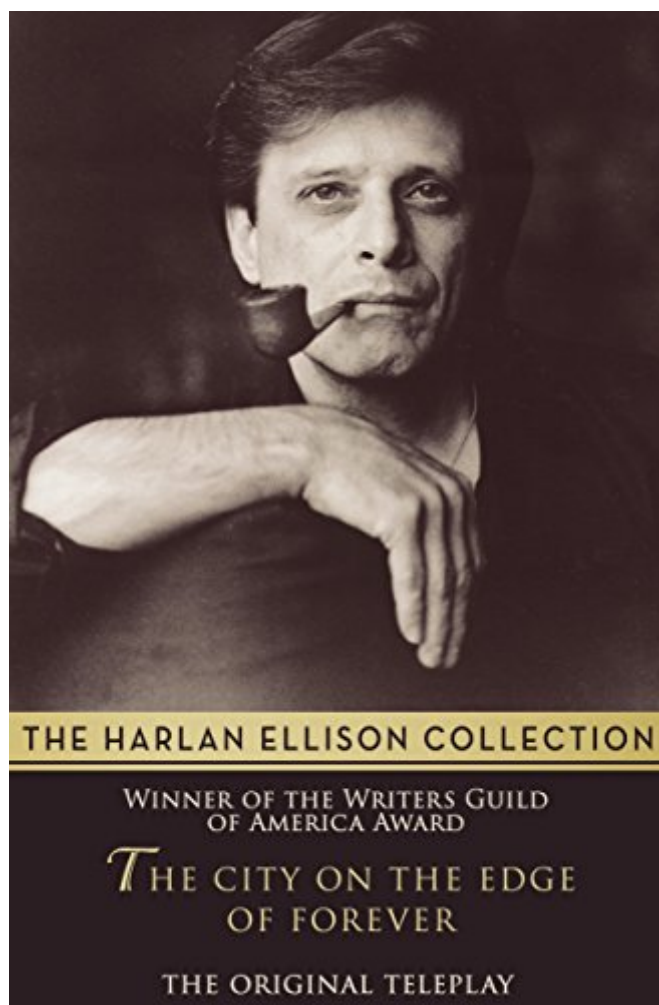


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The City On The Edge Of Forever: The Original Teleplay



Synopsis

The award-winning original teleplay that produced the most beloved episode of the classic Star Trek series—•with an introductory essay by the author. • USS Enterprise Starfleet officers Capt. James T. Kirk and Mr. Spock escort a renegade criminal to a nearby planet for capital punishment, and they discover the remains of a city. This ancient civilization is inhabited by the alien Guardians of Forever, who are tasked with protecting a time machine. When the criminal escapes through the portal into the past, he alters Earth’s timeline, damaging humanity’s future role among the stars. • Pursuing their prisoner, Kirk and Spock are transported to 1930s Depression-era New York City—•where they meet pacifist Edith Koestler, a woman whose fate is entwined with the aftermath of the most devastating war in human history. A woman whom Kirk has grown to love—and has to sacrifice to restore order to the universe. • In its original form, The City on the Edge of Forever won the Writers Guild of America Award for best teleplay. As aired, it won the Hugo Award. But as Harlan Ellison recounts in his expanded introductory essay, “Perils of the City,” the televised episode was a rewrite of his creative vision perpetrated by Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry and the show’s producers. In his trademark visceral, no-holds-barred style, the legendary author broke a thirty-year silence to set the record straight about the mythologized controversy surrounding the celebrated episode, revealing what occurred behind-the-scenes during the production. • Presented here as Ellison originally intended it to be filmed, this published teleplay of The City on the Edge of Forever remains a masterpiece of speculative fiction, and a prime example of his uncanny ability to present humanity with all its virtues and faults. •

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Customer Reviews

I don't normally get wordy in reviews, but this time I'm going to.

As a Star Trek fan (not a Trekkie or a Trekker, just a fan), I've been aware of this controversy for the length of its existence. I know all the principles well enough to figure out who is lying, who is not and who is misunderstood. A couple further caveats: I've had a script turned into a horrible movie unrelated to the original script. I've had people take credit for my work. These can easily be overcome by the average person. I have NOT had anyone lie about me for 30 years, so while Harlan Ellison is easily one of the most hot-tempered people in showbiz (and that's saying something), his page-after-page-after-page bitter rant is completely justified. It's long-winded, but I sympathize.

It's long-winded, but written with such amazing talent that it pulls you through.

It's fascinating to read about the inside story from the most silent (!) member of the controversy. Let me say again, Ellison is wickedly talented, and his original screenplay is very, very good. It is not, however, Star Trek. He nails Kirk, though, so why Shatner had a problem with it, I don't know. With his ego, I can't imagine it's the same problems I had with it, because in every draft, Kirk is great. I admit that if this WAS Star Trek, if Ellison's vision was the guiding vision, Trek would have been a lot more fascinating. But Roddenberry, the true, flawed, guiding visionary established something completely different than Ellison's take on it. I've been a show runner, too, a guiding producer, and understand the Great Bird's problems with the script (not his lies and continual flaming of Ellison, though). Spock wasn't Spock. Crewmen, especially officers, in Trek wouldn't be drug dealers. No matter what he says in the book, the script would have been incredibly expensive to shoot; too expensive. Yet it was well written. Especially at the age Ellison was then, it's a remarkable script and well worth reading. Roddenberry says Ellison wouldn't rewrite it. Ellison did, but he

didn't shore up the problems with it. (I think it's funny he was shocked at who did the final rewrite; seemed obvious to me. There was only one writer who could clean up Roddenberry and Colon's butchery, and she did a marvelous job. "He knows, Doctor, he knows." That line captured everything Ellison went for badly (Spock opining on love is just wrong. Could Nimoy pull that off? Sure...) Also, bringing McCoy in was necessary. While Ellison's solution for McCoy getting drugged was better than what was shot, it would have been expensive to shoot. The whole pirate thing was dumb, too, and in the second script, no way Kirk would leave Rand to the mercy of pirates (to his credit, Ellison thought that was stupid, too. Pirates weren't his idea.) The City on the Edge of Forever was the best Star Trek show, and it is all owed to Harlan Ellison, but the rewrite into the script we saw was as good as TV gets. Ellison wrote with great watercolor strokes; TV is black crayon on paper). It's one of the few classic Trek shows that is still mostly watchable. Also, a word about his treatment and scripts. As a director, I would have hated Ellison. So much of the script was description that was unshootable. It's an entertaining read, but interpreting would be impossible. There was no way, even if they'd done his original script, that he would be happy with it. Is this book worth reading? YES. Great story, better commentaries. If you like Star Trek, the essays by Nimoy, Kelley, Takei, et al is worth the price of the book; they are masterful at avoiding the bitterness of the controversy. I hope Ellison feels better getting all this off his chest. I understand his anger stemming from the lies, but the producer's professional concerns were right on, though I'd love to see Ellison's idea of Star Trek fully developed. The Utopian dream of ST made writing for it crazy hard, I'm sure. Ellison's would have been a hoot. It just wouldn't be Star Trek.

Unless you really like reading angry rants that span around 100 pages, you'll be as disappointed with this book as I was. He wrote the book so he gets to tell his side of the story, but it gets incredibly uninteresting incredibly fast. Yes, we get it, Mr. Ellison • everyone lied about you and treated you badly. We get it! I quickly lost any sympathy I had for Mr. Ellison. Despite some claims of burying the hatchet, it's clear that this script and Star Trek will fester in his mind until the end of the universe. The scripts are okay stories, but they clearly didn't fit into what Star Trek became (or was becoming, I guess). If you actually buy this book, buy it for the scripts. By the way, I believe the scripts needed an editor • certainly his rant at the beginning did! I gave this two stars for the scripts. The rest wasn't worth the money.

From a purely historical viewpoint, especially if you are an Ellison or Star Trek fan (not mutually exclusive conditions), this was a fascinating book. The contrast between the story as written and the TV episode as aired is striking. I suppose I could care more about the angst an artist experiences when their work is altered by others... But I just couldn't work up the enthusiasm for that part of this book which, unfortunately, is is to what most of the pages are dedicated.

This is mostly just Harlan Ellison bitching about how he was mistreated during the production of this episode. The actual episode is presented in a series of grossly basic treatises., not even a fully fleshed out story on which the teleplay was based. not worth the money as far as I'm concerned. Highly disappointed.

Interesting enough read, if you're into "The City on the Edge of Forever" - arguably the best episode of the original Star Trek television series. This "book" is little more than an essay of Ellison ranting on about the evils of Gene Roddenberry and the production staff of Star Trek essentially taking his idea and re-writing it to the point where it is barely recognizable from Ellison's version. Since it is the "best" episode of the series, then it is Ellison's conjecture that everyone basically threw him under the bus and took credit for his work. The book contains his original final draft of his script, and a couple of revisions. But that's about it. Ellison is jaded by the experience - he apparently hasn't made as much off his work than everyone else, and they have all been telling "lies" about him all these years. True enough - Hollywood is a horrible place to do business. Was he shafted? Of course he was - just look at the latest writer's strike and find out how writers are just plain abused in that industry. Does he deserve to be angry? Absolutely! Imagine creating something so powerful as the "best" episode of Star Trek and having everyone not only take credit for it, but acclaim to thousands at conventions that you can't put two words together. After reading Ellison's script, and being intimately familiar with the aired version, I agree with both sides. Ellison's script is a mess - which he blames on Roddenberry forcing him to put in elements that he did not want. But as a story it just doesn't work. There are characters we haven't seen before and won't see again. There is a drug that's introduced in the teaser but not heard about again (cf. Chekhov's gun.) The antagonist's motivation for escaping into the past is sloppily forced toward the McGuffin. Then there's Spock's speech in the denouement which is more suited for McCoy, but still doesn't fit because the Kirk/Keeler relationship was just not developed during the story. The aired version is superior to Ellison's, but that doesn't mean he deserved the treatment he received. I bought the Kindle version -

which contains web links to illustrations. Annoying, but I guess it keeps the footprint on the Kindle to a minimum. Check this out if you're into Trek history and can take some real bad attitude.

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