



Anthony De Longis plays First Maje Culluh, the Kazon who for two seasons made life hell for Captain Janeway and her lost crew on *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*.

ANTHONY DE LONGIS

FIRST MAJE CULLUH By STEVEN ERAMO

agent telling him that he had an audition for a part on *VOYAGER*. With only two scenes left to shoot for the film, De Longis reported to work at 6 p.m. and expected to finish in plenty of time to rest up for his appointment the next morning. Unfortunately, filming didn't finish until 7:30 a.m. the following day, leaving the actor only a few hours before his audition.

with Ron Surma, casting director Julie Lowry-Johnson's associate. He liked what I did with the material and asked me to stick around for an hour to read for the producers.

"Very often when you read for a part, you end up standing in a room filled with six or seven people, and it feels like a lifeboat drill on the *Titanic*," the actor

time I got home, my agent had called to tell me I had the job—which is something that seldom happens in this business. I had to laugh, though, as I've never felt in worse shape before auditioning for a role that I really wanted. Fortunately," he notes, "it had a happy ending."

While searching for a missing Maquis vessel in the Badlands, the U.S.S. *Voyager*, commanded by Captain Kathryn Janeway, is transported into the Delta Quadrant, 70,000 light years from home. Not long after arriving in this uncharted region of space, Janeway and her crew meet up with the Kazon, splintered groups of nomadic tribesmen with a craving for technology, power and ultimate control of the Delta Quadrant. The most ruthless of these Kazon sects, the Nistrim, is led by the cunning First Maje Culluh, portrayed in suitably nasty fashion by actor Anthony De Longis.

"The Kazon appeared in *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*'s pilot episode before I ever was involved in the series," explains De Longis. "Other than the fact that you knew their name, you really didn't know they were anything except a seemingly barbaric menace on that planet. You also saw another branch of them in space, which helped define that there were different sects. The producers were developing the Kazon as they went along. So in playing Culluh, I looked for clues about him and his race from what was on the written page, and then tried to add things of my own."

De Longis was hard at work playing yet another antagonist in the movie *Cybertracker 2* when he received a call from his new



"When you're an actor, you go through these emotional rollercoasters of 'I'll never work in this town again' to 'This is it. Things are really moving now.' It's like a tennis match, and you're the ball," says De Longis. "On the way to the audition, I went from 'OK, I'm going to nail this' to 'Oh, great. Here's my chance to be beamed up, Scotty, and I feel like dog meat.' I met

explains. "At this point, I was reading for the writers as well as Rick Berman and Jeri Taylor [*VOYAGER* executive co-producers].

"I walked into the room, and they were all seated behind one long table. I couldn't help myself and said, 'Oh, good, the Star Chamber.' Jeri was the only one who laughed, and it broke the ice," he chuckles. "I did my reading, and they liked it. By the

Before stepping in front of the camera, De Longis put himself in the hands of Michael Westmore, *STAR TREK*'s resident makeup guru, with whom he had previously worked on *Masters of the Universe*. "The first time around we were sort of making do because they really hadn't done it before except en masse for the opening episode. Michael began by giving me this Klingon-looking forehead, and then he designed these pieces to build up my cheeks slightly along with a funny nose appliance that made it look as if I had nostril tusks. Some of the pieces didn't quite fit me, but I could still animate the prosthetics. We managed to find something that worked pretty well, but then, because I wasn't back for three months, the next time we did the makeup it took a bit of juggling to find the right balance. Steve Webber took over, so Maje Culluh became his responsibility."

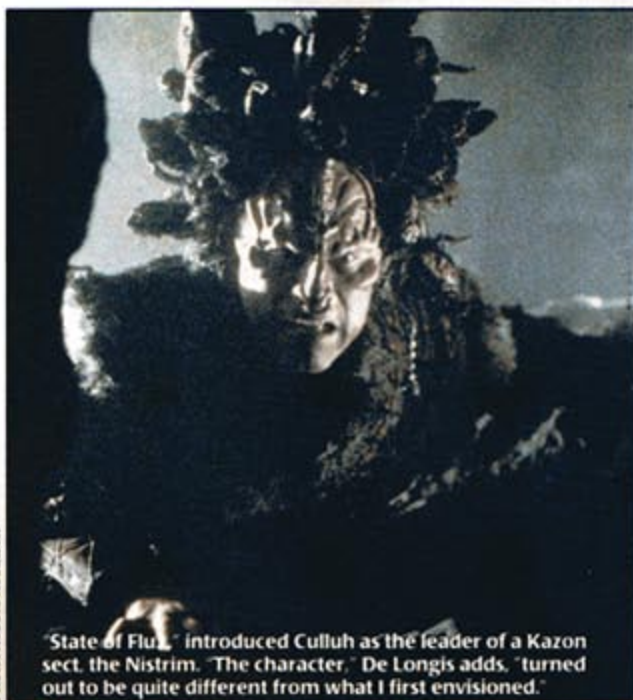
One of the Kazon's most distinctive physical characteristics is their grand hairdos. De Longis laughs out loud when he recalls the making of Culluh's towering coiffure. "When I saw the hairpiece, I thought, 'Well, Culluh must be the leader because he has the biggest head of hair.' One day I asked the hairstylist, 'What is this headdress made out of?' She told me, 'Mostly sponges and dog chew toys.' Some of the stuntmen who played Kazon in the pilot told me that the things were

very heavy, almost like showgirl headdresses, and that they had had one hell of a time working in them. As the series went on, the hairdressers began making them entirely out of foam and sponges, so weight-wise they weren't quite as bad."

Audiences first met Culluh in "State of Flux," in which the *Voyager* crew discovers that the Kazon have somehow acquired Starfleet technology. "The character turned out to be quite different from what I first envisioned. I had read only the few pages that had my character on them for my audition, so, at one point I actually thought that I might somehow be romancing the Captain," laughs De Longis. "When I read the rest of the script, it became very clear that this really wasn't an option, especially after I saw the way they had designed my makeup and hair. I figured chances were that Janeway wasn't going to be interested anyway."

De Longis made his next appearance as Culluh in the tense cat-and-mouse adventure "Maneuvers." This story also sees the return of Martha Hackett as Seska, Culluh's consort and Delta Quadrant co-agitator. Seska defected from *Voyager* in "State of Flux" when it was revealed that she was not only a Cardassian spy but the one who provided replicator technology to the Kazon. She decides to join Culluh and help him to capture *Voyager*.

"Director David Livingston was very nice to work with," says De Longis, "and welcomed the actors' input. One particular scene—the 'Yes, Maje. Yes, Maje' one where Seska tells Culluh he could be anything he wanted, even master of the universe—became a big hoot on the set. Martha played the scene delightfully, and got as kittenish as she ever got around me. David had done all his homework, and it's great whenever you're working with a director who knows what he wants and has figured out all his shots. But in this scene, we were moving around this table



"State of Flux" introduced Culluh as the leader of a Kazon sect, the Nistrim. "The character," De Longis adds, "turned out to be quite different from what I first envisioned."

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Though Culluh and Cardassian spy Seska (Martha Hackett) torment Chakotay in "Maneuvers," De Longis claims, "Robert Beltran was very nice to work with."



too much, and it just didn't feel right. He asked us how we wanted to shoot the scene, and we opted for the intimacy of the sofa.

"Because we were sitting, the camera had to get in much closer, and we had to contort ourselves into some rather user-unfriendly positions, which, conversely, were perfect for either my jewelry, boot or belt to clang into the couch's brass pipes. As soon as we would get into position and were about to shoot you would hear, 'Ting.' " he says. "In the end, it became one of my favorite scenes. The hair department used to give me the 'Yes, Maje. Yes, Maje.' line whenever I came in to get made up. Rather a fun fantasy."

"I really enjoyed 'Maneuvers' because it provided me with the chance to show the audience that Culluh's a dangerous fellow," he explains. "Seska is less in control of him in this episode than she has ever been before. It's obvious that she's the power behind the throne, but there's also a feeling of her swimming among the sharks and that she had better be careful. This episode gives us a better sense of who Culluh is and who these Kazon guys might actually be."

In "Alliances," the actor's third outing as Culluh, both Starfleet and the Kazon are drawn into a temporary truce culminating in betrayal for the *Voyager* crew and destruction for the Kazon. "When I got to the end of the script, the last scene was like something out of *The Godfather, Part III*, where all the mobsters are in one room and the helicopter attacks, killing everyone. I went in to see Jeri Taylor the next day and begged her to let Culluh at least be seen twitching at the episode's end," says De Longis. "She told me that the script had already been changed and said, 'We've decided not to kill you.' Whew!"

Although the nature of his character limited him to scenes with only a few of the program's regulars, De Longis had previous connec-

Photo: Robbie Robinson

Selected Photos: Byron J. Cohen

tions with some of the VOYAGER cast. He taught fencing, stage combat and character movement for 19 years at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Theater Arts Department, at one point working with Robert Picardo in a production of *Geniuses*. He appeared with Robert Duncan McNeill in *Masters of the Universe*. Garrett Wang was one of his students at UCLA.

"Robert Beltran was very nice to work with in 'Maneuvers.' I guess both Garrett and Robert McNeill had put in a good word for me. He felt very comfortable with the physical action and said, 'I know you know what you're doing and I can trust you.' Robert's a very strong actor and a very generous one, both of which always make the work more enjoyable because you can take more risks in the scene, both physical and emotional."

The Kazon Nistram make their final appearance on VOYAGER in the two-part episode "Basics." In the first half, Culluh and Seska hijack *Voyager* and maroon Janeway and her crew on a hostile alien world. "The storming of *Voyager's* Bridge was quite funny," says De Longis. "It's a confined space to begin with, but with 10 people huddled together in the middle plus all us Kazon you needed an Arthur Murray dance lesson to maneuver through the scene."

"There's a point where I'm supposed to smack Kate Mulgrew. I remember us standing on the set and her jokingly saying, 'I bet Anthony has been waiting months for this.' I would very seldom see Kate before we went in front of the cameras, so I never got the chance to really talk with her. I remember working late one night while filming 'Alliances.' While we were waiting around for them to set up the shot, I told her, 'I really liked the way you played that last scene. Boy, I thought outer space was cold,' more or less intimating that she could play cold and distant really well," he jokes. "So we both got a

good chuckle when she came out with the remark about me slapping her."

In "Basics II," the *Voyager* crew get their ship back thanks to the Doctor, Suder, Paris and a group of Talaxians who give the Kazon a shocking send-off. De Longis had hoped that Culluh would promise to return before he abandoned *Voyager* but this was not to be. The show's

more accessible and more interesting the more you know about them. The Klingons, for example, are a fascinating *STAR TREK* race because of their rich culture and traditions, all of which can be mined on a regular basis. The Kazon had a couple of ray guns but that was it. If they're this warrior race, what makes them so dangerous? We never really

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"Culluh must be the leader because he has the biggest head of hair," jokes De Longis, whose first headpiece, made from sponges and dog chew toys, was also quite heavy.

producers had decided it was time for *Voyager* to leave Kazon space in search of deadlier adversaries.

"Unfortunately, the Kazon were never fully articulated as a race. We never got to see them do much of anything other than taking the ship, or the relationship between Culluh and Seska, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Antagonists become both

found out and that, to me, is a shame."

A veteran television, film and stage actor, De Longis has also performed and choreographed his own fights—and those of others—in such films as *Wild Bill*, *Batman Returns*, *Far and Away* and *The Sword and the Sorcerer*. The actor has personally trained such stars as Anjelica Huston, Michelle

Pfeiffer, Charlton Heston, Richard Chamberlain, David Carradine, Jon Voight and Plácido Domingo to use bullwhips and various bladed weapons safely. He has held the position of staff action-choreographer for the Los Angeles Music Center Opera since 1985 and is also an accomplished rider and founding member of the Light Horsemen, a mounted saber and lance performance team.

"The whole reason I developed all these skills is that I hoped they would make me more in demand as an actor," he explains. "Also I enjoy helping other people to do the best they can and to do it safely. When I'm choreographing action, I try not to allow people to focus on the limitations a particular scene might present. Instead, I try to turn it around and make the action an opportunity to articulate character."

"Don't allow either yourself or anybody else to lock the doors, the doors being choices. When I used to look at a character I would say to myself, 'Well, this guy would certainly never do that.' I had already closed the door and locked it, so I missed exploring the possibilities inside that room of my imagination. This attitude divorced me from the character's humanity. Even in the deepest, darkest villain, there's still something human about him, and that vulnerability is usually exposed by something very ordinary and day-to-day. In this experience, you find the human element and, suddenly, the audience recognizes themselves through your humanity. Now you're not playing a cartoon figure anymore, but a three-dimensional character."

Recently, Anthony De Longis has put his talents as an actor, swordsman, horseman and choreographer to good use on such TV series as *Highlander*, *The Adventures of Sinbad* and *Conan*. He's looking forward to facing his next seemingly impossible task and turning it around to work in his favor. "Make it so," he enthuses. 🍌