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[Robert Picardo Gives Us A Piece Of His Mind](#)

Written by Ian Cullen on [March 9, 2009](#) – 6:11 pm -



Robert Picardo (Thanks to Pat Arthur Of [robertpicardo.com](#) for use of picture)

Last month I was given the opportunity to do a sit down interview with actor **Robert Picardo** who, while perhaps best known to genre fans for his role as the Doctor in *Star Trek: Voyager* and Richard Woolsey in *Stargate* has, a huge number of credits spanning movies, television and theatre. [SciFiPulse](#) last spoke with [Bob](#) [back in 2007](#), and [asked him numerous questions about his approach to acting and who his acting heroes were](#).

One project [IMDB.com](#) has added to Picardo's impressive online CV – although it's wise to take such sources with a little pinch of salt until confirmed by the actor cited – in the film, *Legends of Nethiah: The Nameless*. Or in my case, *Legends Of Nethiah: The Unpronounceable!* Thankfully, the actor was more than happy to help me

out and talk about this, as well as some other projects of his we can all look forward too.

When talking about *Legends of Nethiah* he was somewhat surprised to hear that it had been put at the top of his acting credits on IMDB, and revealed that he'd actually done the work on it four years ago, but had since learned that the people behind it had re-edited the production and changed the mythology behind it.

“My character was an old freedom fighter who had been punished by the evil people, and I had been struck mute,” he reveals of his role, in a film that is the first production for [Worlds Last Hero Productions](#) **“In the movie, I have a shaved head and I have scars all over it, and my lips have been sawn shut. I can’t speak but can communicate telepathically. It’s a very unusual thing. I thought the footage was great, and then I heard that they were in some sort of dispute between the producer and the director, and that it would never be completed. It was just a short film, but I recently heard that they were trying to take that footage and incorporate it into a full-length feature.**

“My section was a discrete part of the story, so I don’t have to do any additional shooting. I would love to see it: I was proud of it, and thought it looked really cool. So I hope it ‘s completed.

“I had a brief conversation with someone associated with it, who was brought on to help finish the movie,” he adds. **“Unfortunately I don’t have any more information than that, other than my make – up was quite cool.”**

When talking projects that are still in the works. The actor revealed that he had a fair few things going on.

“I’m starring in a horror movie, which will be completed at the end of March. It’s called [Sensored](#) and I’ve also starred in a murder thriller called *Trail of Blood*.

“Both movies – they’re independent films – are completed and are in postproduction. My expectation is that they’ll both get distribution soon. I’ve seen both and I’m very pleased with them. There’s a lot of great stuff on the screen for such a small budget.”

“I play two very different characters,” Picardo says, revealing he gets to play with his darker side for both movies. **“In *Sensored*, I get to play a very disturbed individual who appears to be your kind of neighbour who lives down the block and wears sweater vests and keeps to himself, but has some very dark secrets going on in his basement.**

“He may be a CIA coercive techniques expert who is torturing and de-programming someone in his basement... or he may just think that he is. It’s rather ambiguous, and everything becomes clearer and clearer as the movie goes on, but you’re never quite sure what the real situation is. It’s quite exciting and creepy, and I am not a nice man.”

As someone who has been involved in theatre, I was taught to keep notes and a diary about the roles I got to play, and I wondered if Robert also kept character notes, given his own theatrical background.

“Of course, in all my scripts,” he acknowledged. **“But as you become more familiar with a character you start to take less notes about his motivation and more notes about technical things.**

“When you’re playing an ongoing character as I did on *Voyager* for seven years,” he continues, **“I didn’t really have to write questions about why am I doing this or what’s my intention as you might in a play that you’re preparing or any role that you are preparing for the first time, but you make more technical notes. So if it were an argumentative scene, I would think through where the peak of my argument might be and how I might change tack. Or simply just technical things: if something was very difficult to say quickly I would put in little scratchy marks so I can phrase it in a certain way and deliver it very quickly and with clarity. But yes, you will see lots of little chicken scratches over pretty much every page I had in *Voyager!*”**

“When you do a play, it’s important to make notes about your characters history,” the actor feels. “Fill in the blanks about his youth and education, and try to mine clues from the script its self about your character.

“The great irony about playing the Doctor on Voyager is that he’s the only character that I’ve played or know of that has zero personal history, because the moment he first appeared in the pilot was the first moment of his existence. Although he had programmed knowledge from other medical professionals, he had been programmed with their experience. He had no individual experience. So having no character history was an unusual and strange none issue in his case.”



Robert Picardo as Richard Woolsey in
Stargate: Atlantis

Another character that Picardo has played is Richard Woolsey, who, over the course of *Stargate SG 1* and *Atlantis*, underwent an incredible transformation. It’s a role Picardo reveals he had doubts about when it came to him becoming a series regular.

“When [producer] [Joe Mallozzi](#) called me and asked, ‘how do you feel about taking over the Atlantis expedition?’ I was of two minds, “ he reveals. “I told him, ‘I love working on the show with you guys and the cast – it’s great fun to do it – but with what we’ve set up with the Woolsey character. I don’t quite see how he could step into the leadership position.’

“First of all we’ve gotten certain comic mileage in the past from the fact that Woolsey has very bad people skills.” Picardo expands. “More importantly, he doesn’t seem very brave and is out and out cowardly in some situations.

“The more I thought about it, the more I thought ‘Let’s turn the problem around’, and I began to see how interesting a challenge it is to take someone whose primarily role has been to evaluate the leadership of others. Woolsey knows enough about the rule-book and all that to come in and question other people’s command decisions, and measure what they did versus what protocol stipulates what they should have

done. How they may have been reckless, how they may have indeed saved the life of a crewman, but endangered everyone else on the base in so doing. So he was a type that came in and said, 'Even though it turned out well, you made this mistake. You took this chance. You risked this possible outcome.'

"So to take that character who is the briefing room's 'armchair quarterback,' as we call them in the States, someone who has great ideas for how the game should be played, but no practical experience of his own, and to suddenly throw him into the game... That seemed like a very interesting challenge and their concept was that it was an interim assignment for him. There was no one else qualified at that time, so the IOA sort of decided to throw him in and see how he faired. Then he fell in love with the job and wanted to keep it.

"So I think the notion of someone who is in middle career and trying to redefine themselves is something that a lot of people find very pertinent now," Picardo continues, warming to his theme, "and it's perhaps more and more pertinent each day as we see thousands and thousands of people in the States losing their jobs and trying to reinvent themselves at middle age, to perhaps do something else to care for themselves and their family. I think it's a theme which was surprisingly prescient given our current [economic] crisis."

When I last interviewed **Robert Picardo** in 2007 I asked him which actor he most admired and he told me that he was a great fan of [Jack Lemmon](#), who he had opportunity to work with on stage during the 1970s. So to wrap the interview up on a somewhat unusual note I asked Bob what type of role he could envisage Lemmon taking on if he were in a Star Trek or any other genre related television series.



A young Jack Lemmon with Tony Curtis and Marilyn Monroe in 'Some Like It Hot'

"That's an interesting question and one I have never gotten before," Picardo shoots back, "So I applaud you for that.

"Jack had tremendous range as an actor," he says, after some thought. "I guess the quality that made him so beloved was that he had a basic decency and accessibility in most every role he played. He really captured a kind of dignity of the guy who was doing the best he could. He may be more commanding and confident in some roles than others, but you always felt that there was something about him that you could trust in, and that's what made him such a great star.

"It depends on, which phase of his career were talking about, but lets say he's in his fifties or something like that. He would have made a great Captain of a Starfleet Vessel and a great mentor character. It would be interesting to see him in Whoopi Goldberg's role on Star Trek: The Next Generation or something like that in his middle career.

"He just could do anything," feels Picardo. "He was a great role model for an actor. He was someone who had been a celebrated star. At the time that I met him, he was in his early fifties and he'd been a star for a quarter of a century. He was just so nice and supportive and gentle. So that would have been great. It's a

question I've never considered before, and I think it's a first as far as my science fiction interviews.”

- *Ian Cullen and [SciFiPulse](#) would like to thank Anne Lindup and her team at [SF Ball](#) for arranging this interview. We'd also like to thank Robert Picardo for agreeing to sit down and chat.*
- **Web Links:**
Robert Picardo's Official web site: www.robertpicardo.com
Legends of Nethiah Trailer: www.worldslastheroproductions.com
Sensored: <http://sensoredmovie.blogspot.com>

Tags: [Interview](#), [Jack Lemmon](#), [Robert Picardo](#), [Star Trek: Voyager](#), [Stargate Atlantis](#)

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2 Responses to “Robert Picardo Gives Us A Piece Of His Mind”

1. By [Athena28](#) on [Mar 10, 2009](#) | [Reply](#)

Ian, Great interview!

2. By [Michelle](#) on [Apr 6, 2009](#) | [Reply](#)

Ah Sensored! Cannot wait to see it. You must check out the site and watch the trailer! I predict this one to be a sort of cult hit. Had a chance to see some of the filming of Sensored as well as actually looking at the basement as it was being built. My daughter and myself got to meet Bob and he is a very intelligent, well spoken man and a great actor. Do not miss this awesome movie.

Michelle

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