

QUESTBUSTERS

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Not sold in stores

Star Trek: The 25th Anniversary Edition

Just as there were countless books, magazines, records, posters, toys, calendars and other shameless marketing tools of the original *Star Trek* series after its resurgence in the '70s (culminating in six feature films and a TV sequel), there have been a number of *Star Trek* computer games released both commercially and through shareware over the years. There was even a popular *Star Trek* game that took place on a grid way back in the days when people paid for time on a local university's mainframe or other business's computer.

Most of these games have been quite honestly dull, with some better than others. Only in the past few years have graphics and animation been added to *Star Trek* computer games. The most recent release was *Star Trek V* from Mindscape, a valiant effort that lost out due to poor arcade sequences and a confusing interface.

Type: graphic adventure & space combat simulator
System: MSDOS (640K, color monitor and 10+ Mhz required, EGA, TGA, 256-VGA; Ad Lib, Roland, Sound Blaster, Pro Audio
Planned ports: maybe Amiga, Mac

A skyful of Star Treks

Now the flood gates have opened! A *Star Trek: The Next Generation* game is on the way from Spectrum Holobyte for IBM, Amiga and Super Nintendo, and other *Star Trek* games are due from Konami for the Nintendo and Game Boy game systems.

But the first of the new wave of *Star Trek* games hails from the designers of

by Russ Ceccola

The Bard's Tale series, *Castle and Battle Chess* — Interplay. *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary* capitalizes (a little late) on the anniversary of the debut of the TV show and puts the player in charge of the original show's main characters on seven challenging missions.

The first time I heard about this game, I pleaded with Interplay to do it right or not do it at all because there had already been a bunch of poor games over the past years. It turned out better than I expected, effectively capturing the spirit, mission types and look of the classic episodes and cast.

Two games in one

Part adventure, part combat simulator and all fun, *Star Trek* thrusts the player into the midst of what might have made a few good episodes. The only wish I have at this point is that Interplay were able to get a clause in their contract that enabled them to use the *Star Trek* license for mission disks or perhaps another game, and not just for the anniversary of the show.

25th Anniversary is limited to two views/sequences: the bridge of the Enterprise and the beam-down sight of the landing party on a particular planet. Although it might seem almost too limited, this setup works well.

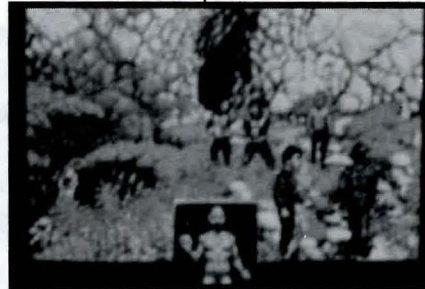
The bridge screen provides access to all functions and stations of the Enterprise, including combat sequences in the main view screen. The landing party consists of Kirk, Spock, McCoy and a character with the most dangerous position in StarFleet — the red-shirted Security Officer with no name who

always got killed within five minutes of beam-down on the TV show. There are 20 stars to which you can journey in the game's galaxy, and you must be careful where you go or you might encounter hostile Klingons, Romulans or Elasi Pirates.

The game is most easily played with the mouse and a few hot keys on the keyboard. You select options from the icon list for a particular

character and can save games at any point. You see the entire bridge from a perspective above and behind the turbo-lift and can monitor all activity with the blink of an eye.

Planetside, the view is similar to a Sierra game, with animated characters seen from a third-person perspective. Again, you control the characters (but mostly Kirk) as the others go off and do



Continued on page 14

Contents

Dusk of the Gods...	3
Clues on TSN.....	5
Uncharted Waters..	6
Buck Rogers 2.....	8
Riders of Rohan....	9
Walkthru: Conan the Cimmerian.....	10
Keys to ye Kingdoms.....	12

Star Trek.....from 1

their own thing. Back on the bridge, you battle other ships by targeting the enemy with the cursor and pressing the mouse or joystick buttons to fire phasers and photon torpedoes. Anticipate the enemy's path and lead him a little, and everything will go fine. You can even switch to a full-screen view of the action if you have enough memory. At this point, the game becomes a bit of a simulator.

Graphics and missions

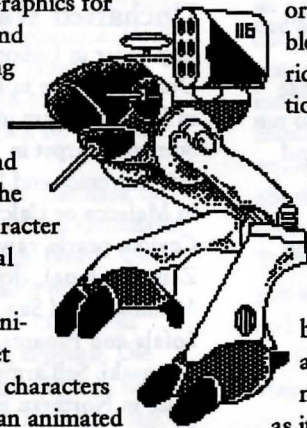
The graphics, sound effects and music are right on target. Graphics for the ship explosions and the show's theme song are a bit weak, but everything else — from phaser blasts and Enterprise flybys to the hailing noise and character movements — are real nice. Illustrations are colorful, and communications from StarFleet Command and other characters are accompanied by an animated figure of the character in question.

Cinematic sequences are liberally interlaced throughout the game for story purposes, which also brings the visuals to life. I'm just happy they got some of the more important sound effects right and that the game plays smoothly without graphic delays.

The missions will satisfy most fans of the series. From mini-battles and protection of other forces to investigation of unexplained events and escort services, the Enterprise and her crew are put through their paces. Even Harry Mudd pops up in one of the missions, but I have not seen a sign of a tribble yet (darn!).

He'd dead, Jim: you grab his tricorder, I'll get his wallet!

A lot of the puzzles are object-based, while some also require politically correct negotiations with aliens.



Capturing the spirit of the series, the missions make good use of all the *Star Trek* gimmicks and gadgets, like tricorders and handheld phasers. Missions are laid out, usually by StarFleet Command, for the crew and, as Kirk, your next steps are up to you. The dialogue is also typical of the series and you'll hear such famous lines as McCoy's ever-popular "He's dead, Jim."

25th Anniversary takes the throne as the leader of all other computer game homages to *Star Trek*. I wish I could have explored more of the Enterprise and the beam-down sites, but perhaps that can be worked into the next game or mission disk. My only other possible complaint with the game is the ridiculous over 45 minutes installation time.

Come on, Interplay, give us a break! While waiting for it to install, I was inspired me to go back and watch some of the old episodes (I have all of them on tape, and watched most of them before the game was ready to play!) and had me wishing that the original had not gone off the air as early as it did. Now we finally have a *Star Trek* game stands out above all others.

Conclusions: I'll leave you with two thoughts. Did you know that not once in any of the episodes or feature films did any character say the often misquoted and popular phrase "Beam me up, Scotty"? Also, I would like any reader who has a positive, confirmed explanation for the numbers in the stardate to send them along to me in care of *QuestBusters*. As a huge *Star Trek* fan, I'm embarrassed to admit it, but I've been wondering about this for years! Thanks. Beam me out of this review, Scotty!

Skill Level: Intermediate
Company: Interplay
Price: \$59.95
QuestBusters price: \$49

Kobold Korner.....from 5

talk to. The plot is linear, allowing absolutely no deviation from the chosen path. I wouldn't recommend this game to anyone, not even my mother-in-law."

Liked the game, but not the review

Fred Brooks disagreed with Giovetti's conclusion that it was "complex, difficult and involved," citing seven parts of the review, including character generation and equipment, the tedium of moving from place to place, and the lack of logic in the 3D vs. 2D modes.

"The review says 'the major deficiency is the inability of the interface to deal with the tedium of moving from place to place in a vast world where everything is the same size.' Not!! Yes, it's tedious to drive 60 miles in a tank at 30 kph in a real-time game, but it's not necessary. Using the Mapper, you point and click where you want to move to, and you're moved there instantaneously in real time...and in a city, pressing C takes you to the center of town."

Brooks, however, "...liked the game, the graphics and the interface" but concurs with Kmosena that the lack of variety in the missions is its downfall. "I still play it, but only while waiting for something new."

Conclusions: These are all all valid points. Except Kmosena's comment about it not being an adventure. The review described it as "militaristic role-playing," which falls into the general category of adventure (though you're right that it's not a pure adventure in the puzzle-solving tradition of Sierra games).

Looking back, Al agrees that it's the lack of variety in missions that is the game's weak point, but argues that "it is difficult and complex if you don't use the pre-rolled characters and are not focusing solely on this game — it's very easy to miss something in the 100-page manual, like the 'C' option, which even Paragon didn't mention when I asked them about this part of the interface on three occasions."