

Star Trek™

The SCUMM™ Game

Concept Document 4/27/88

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SCUMM vs. Simulator

This document describes the structure of a Star Trek™ story game based on SCUMM technology. It contains "action elements" that are currently implemented in SCUMM (or can easily be so implemented). A Simulator version of the game could also be developed, but it would have two important differences. The action elements of that game would be loaded in as separate code modules, taking over from the SCUMM environment for the most part, and more importantly, the Simulator game would be oriented towards maximum use of the action/arcade elements with "story support" to lead you from one action situation to another, while the SCUMM game described here will be story driven, with occasional action elements that grow out of the dramatic situation of the story.

The Characters

We will allow the player to control several of the Enterprise main characters, using the Maniac interface to allow multiple control. Which characters are controlled, and when, will depend on the story. In any case, each character will have specific skills that will be reflected in the verb lists. Some characters will not be able to use certain consoles or devices, others may have limited knowledge. For example, if Chekov goes to the weapons console, he will get clearly labelled verbs such as "arm photon torpedoes" "fire torpedoes" "disable torpedoes for maintenance". If McCoy tried to use the same console, he might get three verbs each labelled "? Torpedoes" and have to guess which was which. Conversely, if McCoy used a medical scanner on a crewmember he would say "It looks like a greenstick fracture of the femur, complicated by a lymphatic infection", while Chekov would just say "I think he's sick".

The Story

We will investigate hiring experienced writers to help us with the story and dialogue. The story will have classic Star Trek elements, emphasizing those that are well implemented on our system. For example, many of the episodes involved having a landing party in one location, on a planet or alien ship, while some of the regulars were still aboard the Enterprise, dealing with their

own problems. Our multiple character interface and approach to multiple character problems will make these situations easy to develop. Also, the common Science Fiction/Star Trek device of evil forces taking over the main characters will be easy to implement, and effective as the characters normally under player control are possessed, and take on a life of their own.

Design Principles

There are several overriding principals we will use to guide us in the design of the game. First, we will remain faithful to the look and feel of the original Star Trek TV series, providing the action, character interaction, story elements, humor, and moral/technical dilemmas it was known for. Second, we will incorporate items that the computer and SCUMM do well, providing alien landscape to explore, action sequences for excitement, and third person "cinematic" views in cases where the TV series used them; seeing phasers and torpedoes fire from outside the ship, cutting to watch the whole bridge as the Enterprise shakes from side to side, letting the player see distant action where it is important through cut scenes. Third, we will follow our principal of "difficult death" by making it hard to reach dead ends (literal or figurative) by always providing alternatives to continue the story after all but the most extreme problems. Finally, we will make game play tradeoffs to maximize the fun of the game. It would be possible for instance to map out the entire Enterprise with all its decks, staterooms, labs, etc., but we will only incorporate the areas that will have interesting things happening in them, to avoid boring the player with endless repetition of similar rooms, or provide situations to lead the player out of dull situations when they are stuck.

Action Sequences

We will have a number of action sequences that allow the player to use some speed and dexterity to help advance the story. For example, there will be opportunities for personal combat, with and without phasers, as well as Starship combat. Equipment will be usable, from things like Tricorders that are simple button pressing to handling the matter-antimatter mix to squeeze extra speed out of the engines. In all action sequences involving some skill, we will make sure that partial failure will not end the game. For all situations involving action resolution, there will be a non-action based way to solve the puzzle. For instance, a prisoner has escaped Sick Bay with a phaser and is heading for the transporter room to beam back to his ship. You can stop him with a number of action sequences - as he passes each crewmember you have control over, a cut scene will enable you to try to stun him. If you are a terrible shot or just hate these kind of sequences, you can go to the Jeffries Tube with Kirk or Scotty and yank the power leads to the Transporter room, much like the fuse box in Maniac. Another example would be that the Enterprise must reach a planet quickly because it is under

attack by Klingons. You can have Scotty do a simple action game that tunes the matter-antimatter mix, getting a little extra speed out of the engines at the risk of engine failure if you slip. Success means you reach the planet while the Klingons are still there, and get to engage in combat. Failure, or just not choosing to try to push for extra speed gets you there too late to fight, but you can still beam down to the planet and find clues that will let you figure out where they went next. This will let both action and puzzle players have equally good times.

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The Meeting Tomorrow

The game as described above is what we would like to pitch to Simon and Schuster. We intend to make sure they've seen Maniac, and illustrate Star Trek situations with Maniac implementation. We'll also tell them how the SCUMM alternative fits Star Trek better than the simulator. Let's use the time before the meeting to make sure we have a united view of a great Star Trek game that we can all be proud of.

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