MG: The Final Frontier
by Bill Jahnel

The Final Frontier: All Things Trek on the Mac

There are few genres more universally appealing to computer gamers than that of the Star Trek universe.   In fact, I suspect more than a few Mac Users secretly wish that when A/V technology is perfected and our Macs respond to voice commands, the voice talking back to us with be that warm and familiar computer voice of Majel Barrett-Roddenberry's.   While we aren't there yet, there are a vast number of Star Trek-related entertainment products available for the Mac Trek enthusiast.   While this review will be concentrating primarily on the commercial and in-print Star Trek programs available, I will take a quick look at the history of other Trek items that have been available for the Mac at one time or another.

Historical MacTrek. The original Trek items for the Mac did not come from stores but from the rabid imaginations of Mac shareware programmers.   As most old-time Mac users know, there was a classic Apple II ASCII game known as Trek, wherein you moved from one text-based starmap to another, heading mighty Enterprise, as symbolized by the letter E.   You shot at Klingons (symbolized by a K) with phasers (it inverted the K when they hit) or with photon torpedoes (#).   There was a certain elegance and simplicity to this Trek game, and many shareware variations of the game have been written to port this nostalgic experience to the Mac.   Such games as MacTrek, Rescue!, Star Patrol, Stellar Imperium, Trek Revisited, Galactic Trek, and others recaptured the old flavor of hunt the Galaxy and destroy anything that moves and is Klingon (obviously from our classic series viewpoint!).   However, the BIG hit in the days when Macs were Black and White and really only found in computer labs at college was NetTrek, THE gaming addiction of Mac college students in the late 1980s. NetTrek captured the unique flavor of the Mac, in that it took advantage of networks and allowed you to play head to head against other humans.   What killed most of these fledgling games was Paramount's sudden interest in copyright violations in the early 90s as the Next Generation marketing behemoth began to pick up steam.   Small programmers certainly

didn't have the licensing money, so most programmers suddenly found villains called Klystrons or something similar.   What is amazing is that some of these games still run clean on today's Macs — NetTrek will not, but going through my archives I found that Trek. . . Revisited (written in 1988) ran just dandy on my Quadra 800!

There were other easy to find Trek-based entertainments in those halcyon days before Paramount began to put its foot down.   The Macs which were "new" — that had microphone ports — suddenly allowed easy transmission of sound grabs from television, audio tapes, and elsewhere.   Soon bulletin boards and online services were littered with sound files of "Beam me up, Scotty!", "Live long and prosper," and "Engage!"   Bruce Tomlin's Soundmaster — still a masterful classic shareware that remains a must-have today — allowed you to attach sounds to finder events.   (My system startup has Majel's voice saying, "Diagnostic Complete. All systems functioning within normal parameters," which with about 35 or so extensions is always good to hear, even if untrue!)   The proliferation of scanners at colleges also saw the scanning of Trek images as startup screens — also soon nipped in the bud by copyright concerns.

Out of print Commercial Trek. When Paramount did give official licensing rights to its sounds, Sound Source Unlimited's AudioClips series proliferated.   Such collections drew well-thought out short sound clips from classic Trek (the Final Frontier Collection) and the Next Generation (the Data Collection, which remains my personal favorite).   However, a recent conversation with Sound Source revealed that they could not justify the licensing cost to product sales ratio for the Mac Sound clips, and they went the way of the dodo. Some of these old sound collections can still be found in bargain bins, Trek conventions, or software resale shops — I recently picked up for $7 something called the "Mac Utility Pac," which contained in it the Final Frontier, the original Intermission, and a now-dated copy of Virex.

Sound Source Unlimited and VTGA Studios produced both the Star Trek: Next Generation Multimedia Collection and Star Trek: The Original Series multimedia Collection on CD-ROM in 1993.   Produced for both the Mac and IBM on each of the CD-ROMs, the Mac side contained Selections from the Audioclips files and bundled Soundmaster to play them; it also contained screen-sized PICT files for use with the shareware program Colordesk.   This too seems difficult to find nowadays, but if you can still grab a copy for a fair price (it was originally street priced at around $30) it will give a nice selection of Trek-based enjoyment.

Commercially Available Today.   There are four major companies that currently stock Trek-related Mac merchandise on the shelves commercially: Berkeley, Simon & Schuster Interactive, MacPlay, and MouseTek.   Of these, only MacPlay's Star Trek: 25th Anniversary is truly a game; the others are Trek-related entertainments, screensavers, or Trek-themed products.

MacPlay: MacPlay has two versions of its Star Trek: 25th Anniversary game out.   The original disk-based game was previewed in the September 1993 IMG and was reviewed two months later in our November issue of that year.   The enhanced CD-ROM, which I had the pleasure of reviewing in our December 1994 issue, is truly a great value.   Playing a series of scenarios from the old series, you take on the personas of the big three — Kirk, Spock, and McCoy — on landing party missions in a King's Quest-like interface.

he game scenarios offer multiple endings, and in between major missions you get to navigate the Enterprise through a series of battles, in a war simulation that is not only exciting and entertaining, but it has the proper balance between challenge and not forcing the player to try and worry through too many controls.   The enhanced CD-ROM has the voices of all the major original actors, which strongly aids playability.   Street priced at $40 for the regular game and $50 for the CD-ROM, I highly recommend the enhanced CD-ROM, which I rated four joysticks in the December review.   It is also currently the only real Trek-themed game currently commercially produced for the Macintosh.

Simon & Schuster Interactive: It was perhaps fitting that the showpiece for new Mac technology would appear on a Star Trek-themed CD-ROM.   The Star Trek Interactive Manual is a masterpiece of the new QuickTime VR technology, and deservedly won a four-joystick review from IMG in the December 1994 issue.   With a tour narrated By Jonathan Frakes and with the voice talents of Majel Barrett Roddenberry, the CD-ROM is an explorers paradise through the Enterprise 1701-D.

hile there are occasional quibbles with the interface, there is little quibble with the excellence of this product.   The ability to move through space in three dimensional interiors and rotate three dimensionally photo-realistic shots of the ship's exteriors is the opening glimpse of games that are yet to come.   While really more of an exploratory entertainment product than a game properly, you can't go wrong at its reasonable street price of $45.

Berkeley Systems: Berkeley is currently the reigning champion behemoth of available Trek-themed products.   Their four current offerings are the Star Trek (Original Series) and Next Generation Screensavers for their mega-hit After Dark; Trek movie Screen Posters, a combination of screen saver for After Dark and Desktop installation utility; and finally, StarDate, which is actually a Trek-based version of their new and popular calendar program Expresso.   Since these products have not previously been reviewed in Inside Mac Games, I will dwell a little longer on them in this overview.

The Star Trek Screensaver: Coming with their After Dark 2.0 engine, but fully compatible with Berkeley's Superior 3.0 engine, the Star Trek Screensaver set burst upon the Mac world with great acclaim.   With today's monitor's lifespans, burn-in is more mythology than reality. However, as my bulging drive full of 32 megabytes of After Dark screensavers attest, their true value is in their entertainment.   The original screensaver features some fifteen screensavers.   Of these, one was more of a throwaway (the SOUNDER, which just plays random Trek-sounds from the files) but most ranged from the diverting to the enthralling. Amongst my personal favorites are Brain Cells, those marvelous little spine-attachers from "Operation—Annihilate," who suck onto your screen sides and front.   Marvelously gross! The Spock sequence beams Nimoy's character onto your desktop to make observations, analyze things, and even get his with those happy spore flowers that always got him in trouble.   Final Exam was a Trek trivia game that you could play interactively on a caps lock depressed; and Planetary Atlas, Scotty's Files, Ship Panels, and Sickbay all simulated major features from the Enterprise, giving the look and feel of Trek displays on your home computer.   When it was first released, it rightly blew everyone away.   Berkeley has become more sophisticated in their designs in their future installments, but this package still holds up very well as an entertainment group — my favorite being the Tholian Web for pure visual fun — but admittedly, as became the case with more of the Berkeley screensavers, these emphasized more fun than saving your screen from burnout.

Star Trek ScreenPosters: Featuring visual shots from the Original Series Trek films (Generations was yet to come), the ScreenPosters served a dual function.   In screensaver mode it was a slideshow of the 45 images.   Its primary function, however, was to take these images and place them on your desktop as a background — and the ScreenPosters module

did these cleanly, effectively, and with minimal conflicts.   Many of the selections are extremely visually pleasing, particularly the Federation Space Station shot and the shot of the Enterprise circling a blue nebula.   While the posters and the original series screensaver have each been street priced at $30 each, there has been in many stores a sale on the "Ultimate Trek Bundle" which takes both these packages and sells them at a very reasonable $40.   One special tip: You can add any ScreenPoster you want by placing a JPEG format picture in the Star Trek Images folder and changing its file creator type (with a utility such as Norton's Disk Editor or the shareware program Snitch or some other utility) to "Strm."   It should be noted that After Dark has enhanced its screen poster technology in its newest release of the Loony Toons CD.

Star Trek Next Generation Screensaver: The Next Generation Screensaver is also an extremely clean and well-thought out series of entertainment modules.   Perhaps my sentimental favorite is Worf's Weapons, where Worf comes on your desktop with the help of his son Alexander, then proceeds to tear up your screen in Klingon battle exercises.   An extremely funny one is Data Dances — when during the episode "Data's Day" Beverly taught Data to dance for a wedding, his skills have obviously sharpened — and I dare you not to smile at Data's Rhumba.

 will note in the nitpickers tradition that His cha-cha-cha, while in time to the music, consisted of many moves that I was unaware in standard cha-cha-cha (being a ballroom dancer myself), but its effect was no less fun.   The Romulan option in the Next Gen version of messages was really great — I have this amused idea of leaving swear words in Romulan in an office. . . Warp Effect is a highly enhanced version of the various warp effects, especially since this has a "roam" feature, where the perspective will continuously rotate,

changing perspectives.   A good package and fair price for $30.   One fun hint: Watch for the multiple-Enterprise episode moment in the Encounters module.   When the screen goes through about its third view of different timelines, we get treated by having Picard and Riker duet on flute/trombone to "When the Saints Go Marching In."   I about fell out of my chair!

StarDate: Berkeley's Expresso has been getting great praise for a user-friendly midrange personal contact manager/address book/to-do list/calendar.   What sets StarDate apart is its Trek-oriented theme, which combined with Expresso's engine makes it a powerful and fun productivity tool.   You have nine different Trek-based looks to play with — some animated — ranging from Borg-like to very Starfleet console panel proper.   Since the looks can be changed on the fly, it never affects your calendar information adversely.   While not as robust as the Now-Up-to-Date/Now Contact package, StarDate has one nifty feature that no other PIM I've played with has: It can transfer the current month's calendar to your desktop (one supposes this uses the same ScreenPoster technology pioneered in Trek ScreenPosters).

ll in all, StarDate is an extremely impressive package for productivity; but its reason for its inclusion in this review is that it is a slick, fun, and wonderful Trek-based program that is hard to beat at its slender street price of $50.   Compared to the standard $75-$100 price range for a full PIM pack, the Trek StarDate PIM might make your wallet sigh enough so that you can afford to grab other Trek goodies.

MouseTek: MouseTek offers some of the most attractive mouse pads in large sizes at extremely reasonable prices.   For $9.95 you may choose among ten different Trek designs. All of these designs have a solid foam backing and a smooth slick surface.   They also are

some of the largest pads available, besides their extreme attractiveness as Trek collectibles. If your mouse pad comfort tastes run to the smooth surface rather than the rough, MouseTek's Trek Pads are a great way to go.

Public Domain Available Today.   There are still some really cool Trek freebies you can find on local BBSs or online services.   America Online has a huge promotional for Star Trek: Generations at Hollywood Online (Keyword: Hollywood), which includes movie stills in graphic formats (something to feed to your ScreenPosters!), QuickTime clips, and Mac-based Press kits.   There used to be a public domain font called CRILLEE, which was the Trek-based font, but Letraset has purchased the copyright to the name Crillee, so the same public domain font has been retitled GENERATIONS, which can be found in the Macintosh Desktop Publishing Forum of America Online. (Keyword: MDP)   Other public domain fonts which can be found by using the search parameter "Trek" include a type family of Trek fonts from the movie posters, DS9 titles, and Romulan/Vulcan and Klingon typefaces.

Don't forget the Net! One of the best guides to Trek on the net is the marvelous book NetTrek: Your Guide to Trek Life in Cyberspace, released by Random House Publishing in Conjunction with Michael Wolff & Co. Digital Publishing.   These are the same folks who offer the NetGuide series, and what a series!   Web sites, a guide to the commercial services' Trek forums, FTP sites, interactive games and chats — you name it and this book has it!   It also has a great FAQ sheet, some cool offers for connecting to services, and is sure to send you online for hours and hours of fun-hunting, as it also includes info on Babylon 5, Star Wars, and Dr. Who fandom online.   Retail Priced at $19.00, this book was a steal at (of all places) Sam's Club for just under $11.   One of the funniest things I learned: Hoover's Business indexing guide (Company Profiles) — which it is represented online at a Web page and on AOL — actually keeps profiles on 24th century businesses, including Quark's!
Speaking of AOL, as a frequent user of AOL I can't help but mention the fine America Online Trek Forum (Keyword: Trek - what else?) run by Data1701D and Jamie1990.   With a good number of message threads on all of the series and movies, cool chats, up-to-date listings of the scheduled episodes, and one of the friendliest staffs around, I have been able to sort my Trek tape collection or find that particular Trek resource right when and where I needed it. The highlight of the Trek Forum was a few months ago when they hosted an online auditorium interview /chat with Rick Berman, the executive producer of NextGen, Generations, and one of the three executive producers of Voyager.   This is not to slight other commercial services — I know there are fine forums on eWorld, Prodigy, Genie, and Compuserve.   However, the enthusiasm and professionalism of the staff of the AOL Trek forum and my personal experience of their wholehearted willingness to help their users deserves meritorious mention.

Looking to the Future.   Right now there are at least three companies developing Star Trek games in production or translation to the Mac right now.   MacPlay is working on its Mac version of Star Trek: Judgment Rites, their sequel to the 25th anniversary game.   The preview screenshots included in this overview (and these are from the Mac version currently in development) show that this port should have great promise.   (Most tantalizing perhaps is a chess puzzle played out in the three-dimensional chess board of the classic Trek series). Sadly, its release date has been pushed back to November.   MacPlay is also working on Star Trek: Fleet Academy, but there is no known release date for the Mac title yet, beyond MacPlay's commitment to the project.

pectrum HoloByte is working on two Star Trek CD-ROM titles — Star Trek: The Next Generation: Final Unity and Star Trek: Generations.   Both of the previews shown at the Electronic Entertainment Expo were very well described by our Editor in the May 1995 issue in the first part of his report of that event.

Finally, Paramount Interactive is entering the fray with its production of a DS9 CD-ROM game.   As in the games above, the voices and images of the actors from the series will be incorporated into these productions, and with the big bucks of the Paramount megalith and the recent upswing in DS9 storylines, this might prove to be a sleeper hit for both the Mac and the television series.

With three big names and five major commercial Trek games in the works, the future for Trek entertainment on your Mac looks extremely bright — perhaps fitting, in an almost Gene Roddenberry-esque optimistic view of the future.