

'Star Trek Online' to beam gamers to the bridge

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This screen grab released by Atari/Cryptic Studios shows a scene from "Star Trek Online".(AP Photo/Atari-Cryptic Studios)

(AP) -- The most iconic setting in "Star Trek" almost didn't make it into the series' online video game.

The developers at Cryptic Studios were focusing on recreating the sci-fi franchise's universe for "[Star Trek Online](#)," the upcoming massively multiplayer online [game](#) that boldly casts players as captains of their own starship. Yet they were leaving out a crucial location: the bridge. Despite their initial hesitation, the game's masterminds decided to make it so.

"We didn't want to have interiors at launch," said "Star Trek Online" executive producer Craig Zinkievich. "We thought it was just a little bit too much. We really wanted to make sure we delivered a really deep

experience, but your bridge not being in the game, it really felt like a hole in the game, and it was just something that we had to put in."

When players design their virtual vessels, they can choose from about 20 different bridges - like one resembling the command centers aboard the famed Enterprises or the brawny Defiant from "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine." Zinkievich said the bridges will mostly function as social hubs where gamers can hangout with their bridge officers and other captains online.

The game is set 22 years after the supernova that destroyed the Romulan homeworld and transported an elder Spock and the villainous Nero into director J.J. Abrams' reimagined "Star Trek." Peace between the Federation and Klingons has since evaporated, meaning space combat will play a vital role in the game, though there are still strange new worlds to explore.

"It's familiar, but it's new," said Zinkievich. "We've changed a few things and added a few things to the universe. I think that's what keeps us from stepping on the hardcore Trekkies' toes. The team is made up of 'Star Trek' fans and avid MMO fans, so if we can make a game that doesn't churn our stomach, then I think we can definitely satisfy the fans."

"Star Trek Online" is scheduled for release Feb. 2.

On the Net: <http://www.startrekonline.com>

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