

Star Trek Armada – Windows

Developed by: Activision (<http://www.activision.com>)

Published by: Activision (<http://www.activision.com>)

Reviewed by: Tim Maxwell

Official Site: <http://www.st-armada.com>

Genre: Strategy

System Requirements:

The minimum system requirements for hardware are:

200 MHz Pentium Processor or Equivalent

32 MB RAM (64 MB recommended)

Win 95/98

28.8 modem for multiplayer

The minimum system requirements for software are:

266 MHz Pentium Processor or Equivalent

64 MB RAM

Win 95/98

28.8 modem for multiplayer

Supports: 3D Acceleration

ESRB: Everyone

Overall Rating: 7.5

Graphics: 7/10

Sound: 8/10

Documentation: 8/10

Getting Started: 7/10

Gameplay: 7/10

Value: 8/10

The Good Press: Star Trek fans will instantly recognize many of their favorite characters, ships, and weapons; some nifty graphical effects; solid voice acting and cinematography.

The Bad Press: Questionable AI at times; somewhat buggy; long load times.

Overview: *Armada* isn't the deepest RTS around, but its logical interface and movie-like flair make it more than worth the price of admission.

Tips:

Any unmanned ship is easy pickens. Simply beam a few crewmembers aboard and you've got yourself some free additional firepower.

If your mission objectives take you near a Dilithium moon, deploy several mining ships immediately so you can keep production going.

If possible, keep the Enterprise (or equivalent ship) out of large-scale battles. It has strong shields and excellent firepower, but if it is destroyed, that's all she wrote.

Use the blue nebulae to your advantage. Enemy ships cannot track you when you're inside them.

Though I'm no expert on the subject, it would seem to me that creating a real-time strategy game based on a popular movie license would be much simpler than devising one from scratch. The lucrative *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* licenses are without a doubt the most popular and sought-after franchises available, and have been well represented in the gaming industry. The reason is simple: on the consumer side, players get the opportunity to take control of their favorite characters/vehicles from the movies, while developers can concentrate more on perfecting the gameplay since all the characters, ships, locales, etc. are already established. So why is it that 90% of all titles based on these licenses turn out to be stinkers? I have two theories on the issue: 1) developers don't put forth as much effort figuring that the license alone will be enough to coax consumers into buying it, or 2)

there isn't enough money left over after buying rights to the license to refine the game as much as they'd like. Either way, I'm happy to report that Activision has gone beyond expectations with *Star Trek Armada*, and if you're a fan of the *Star Trek* movies or TV shows, you won't want to miss this one.

The story goes like this: the Dominion War is over and the three dominant superpowers, the Federation, the Klingons, and the Romulans have all returned to their homelands to devise future plans. The galaxy is at peace, or so it seems. Yet, a silent and deadly species known as the Borg are running rampant in the far reaches of space, obliterating anything in their path. Yes, the Borg have returned, and it's up to you to put an end to the carnage.

After a nifty cinematic sequence, you are transported to the main menu screen where you select the campaign you wish to play. You can choose to play as the Federation, the Klingons, the Romulans, or the Borg. Each of the campaigns are accessible immediately, but it is recommended that you begin with the Federation (the easiest) and move on from there. Four missions constitute one campaign, and once you have conquered them all, a finale mission campaign becomes available. The mission objectives vary nicely and offer a wide variety of tasks to perform. Some missions have you scouting the area and disposing of all enemy targets, while others simply have you build and man a star base, or escape to a jump node. Most of the missions aren't overly difficult, but offer enough challenge to keep things interesting.

Armada definitely doesn't disappoint in terms of presentation value, and *Star Trek* junkies will simply eat it up. Fans will instantly recognize ships like the USS Enterprise, and weapons such as Phasers and Photon Torpedoes. In addition, *Trek* veterans Patrick Stewart, Michael Dorn, and Denise Crosby have all lent their voice talents in the making of *Armada* and add immensely to an already polished movie-like experience. The voice acting and graphical effects are both very impressive, and the cinematic sequences blend seamlessly with the game animation. Of course there's also the stellar musical score, which does a bang-up job of increasing tension during tough battles and filling your ears with recognizable tunes during cut scenes.

The in-game interface should be fairly recognizable to most RTS fans. The mouse can control every aspect of the game, or you can set up hotkeys on the keyboard if you prefer. A small map of the entire region sits in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen and allows you to instantly view any portion of your locale with just a click. Areas of the map that you haven't explored are grayed out. In addition, a small cinematic window keeps you abreast to any battles taking place so if you see one of your ships getting pulverized, you can simply click the window and be transported to the location of the battle. To command your ships, a group of icons appears along with the ship's status when you click on it. From here, you can order them to perform such tasks as scout unexplored areas of the map, employ search and destroy tactics, or head to the nearest shipyard for repairs. Some ships are made for warfare, while others are put in place to handle construction. Construction ships don't have weapons, but are the only means to build bases, shipyards, turrets, weapon research facilities, etc.. In order to build all of these commodities, you must have a steady supply of Dilithium, which can be mined at nearby Dilithium moons. In general, the interface works pretty well, but it can be difficult at times to keep everything under control. It also doesn't help that your ships have a bad habit of stopping midway through their orders and just sitting there. I can't remember how many times I sent a fleet of ships after an enemy structure and later found them stopped halfway to the waypoint.

The only other gripe I have with *Armada* is that the game can get boring at times, though this doesn't necessarily happen for lack of tasks to complete. There is always something to be done, but the enemy AI is rather dimwitted at times and will do little to intervene as you build an impregnable fortress of troops and resources. For example, one mission has you locate and destroy a Borg outpost near the southern edge of the game map. Time after time I sent my paltry fleet of ships down there to dispatch them and was immediately turned into rubble by their weaponry. Only then did I realize that they'd never go on the offensive and try to destroy me. So next time, I set up three Dilithium miners, a shipyard, and a star base and built up about three-dozen ships. I then sent all of them down and had destroyed all the hostiles in a matter of seconds. Similar tactics will get you through a good many missions with relative ease, but sitting around waiting for your shipyard to assemble ship after ship isn't my idea of fun. Luckily, this isn't a problem per se since you can simply build as many ships as you think you need. In essence, the game can be as easy or as challenging as you want it to be.

Overall, I was very pleased with *Star Trek Armada*—and this comes from someone who isn't a big fan of *Star Trek* or real-time strategy games. The game won't be dethroning favorites such as *Starcraft* or *Age of Empires* with its depth anytime soon, but fans of *Star Trek* and casual RTS fans will no doubt enjoy its relatively simple interface and brilliant cinematography. It's been a long time coming *Trek* fans, but you finally have a game worth playing.