[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:03:12 PM

Hello, everyone. I'm Cipher. And I'm going to be covering something that is often not considered. We've discussed the importance of having well rounded characters, but what is the ship of a sim but yet another character?

Sorry, my coffee machine chose this point to overflow my coffee too. But, I'd like to open first with a quote on the subject by Gene Roddenberry. Because that really helped to quantify how I felt on why having a ship that is as well rounded as its crew is important. Not just at the sim level, but at the options available at the fleet level.

"Please remember that a major of Star Trek has always been the Starship Enterprise and her mission. The ship is not just a vehicle - she is the touchstone by which all of our characters demonstrate who they are and what they're up to in the universe."

While what I'm going to get into is going to be mainly Trek oriented, you can apply the same principles in any setting.

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:07:32 PM

I remember first seeing USS Enterprise in 1968, I thought wow don't I just wish that were true.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:07:37 PM

I think at almost every point, a character or more refers to their ship/station as "home" in the series.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:08:27 PM

Exactly. Captain Janeway I think said it best in Year of Hell Pt. 2

"Oh, you're wrong. It's much more than that. This ship has been our home. It's kept us together. It's been part of our family. As illogical as this might sound, I feel as close to Voyager as I do to any other member of my crew. It's carried us, Tuvok. Even nurtured us. And right now, it needs one of us."

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:08:41 PM

A ship is the crews home, it's where they're the strongest.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:09:25 PM

But let's back up a bit. Because I work at the Resources level of Pegasus Fleet, and a challenge I'm faced with is offering our potential COs ships that can come into their own like this.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:09:25 PM

Exactly. In Civil Defense, Bashir says, "This station was finally starting to feel like home," and Kira countered him, "Remember that this station was built by Cardassians." So a ship can have more than one evocation to its crew.

[PF] AlexM 2/20/2021, 12:09:42 PM

My personal favorite quote about the ship was from Admiral McCoy. But I don't want to steal Cipher's thunder.

Storming Norman 2/20/2021, 12:10:16 PM

The ending of Voyage home always has me in tears

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:10:43 PM

After all, the options made available are where all of our journeys begin.

So we all know the ones that are already on the table, made available by canon, but we of course will always want to put as much on the table at this proverbial buffet as we can. More options = more COs and more sims. Debatable, but I also like variety so I don't argue it too hard.

But then comes the point where you start to see a disturbingly consistent trend among many fanon designs - these massive dreadnoughts, bristling with enough firepower to put several navies to shame, engines that work by moving space rather than the ship, able to do everything perfectly and nothing can stop it.

(And if you get the joke with the engines, I hope someone did)

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:13:56 PM

I always base any ship I create on an already serving class, that way I have a base from which to work from.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:14:35 PM

Like a good character, as @Amanda Rose would point out, a ship should have its strengths and weaknesses.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:14:40 PM

Bingo.

And on one hand, yes, serving on these titans of perfection sounds great...but it utterly destroys all sense of danger.

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:15:01 PM

My USS Searcher class was base on Voyager, only slightly uprated.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:15:07 PM

I once joined a ship that was basically a moving starbase.

It never got off, but I was curious to see how that'd work

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:15:15 PM

The sweetness is in overcoming the ship's technical weaknesses, not in just blasting away with its strengths

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 12:15:20 PM

or pushes the challenge to overcome to unbelievable, universe ending, levels... every. single. time.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:15:34 PM

And you read my mind

Allison 2/20/2021, 12:16:15 PM

I always try to incorporate the ship of any simm as a living breathing person as my character constantly interacts with different systems, etc

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:16:38 PM

And that can kill crew enthusiasm like you wouldn't believe. When EVERY mission is life or death for all life as we know it, the Intensity is left at 11 and never gets to scale down. Or you now have to really reach to explain how some lowly Bird of Prey or renegade *Miranda* is now a threat of any kind.

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:17:09 PM

Go to big, and you remove the excitement of pushing the envelope.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:17:36 PM

yeah

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 12:17:43 PM

There's a reason "I just cannae do it Cap'n" is one of Scotty's most famous quips

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:17:52 PM

So, it falls on the resources team to make sure you curb that. Jack of all trades is sometimes your only option, but that means that compromises were made to achieve that. But remember, it's "Jack of all trades" not "Ace of all trades"

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:18:25 PM

Broad knowledge and OK at much vs. specialist in the field, but quite narrow of focus.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:18:25 PM

Where has it fallen short when compared to a specialized design?

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:18:58 PM

The Miranda class is an often overlooked class, and really it was very good at its job.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:19:20 PM

There has to be a reason it was around even up til the Dominion War right? 😉

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:19:24 PM

And on the flip side, it's okay to have a specialized class on hand. That might sound like you won't use it, but consider that there's always someone looking to CO a niche sims.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:19:57 PM

I think that reason was they threw every possible model at the screen. >_> (Yes, I know, I'm making a joke, I think using a Miranda-class depends on your timeline and threat levels.)

Allison 2/20/2021, 12:20:32 PM

My favorite class still is the Excelsior Class

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:20:41 PM

Hospital ships, small science vessels, diplomatic couriers, border patrol vessels. Your job is to put the options on the table, let the potential COs come. Because that's where you'll attract some surprisingly serious talent.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 12:21:08 PM

Even considering In-Character reasons can be much along the same lines: We need to throw everything at this threat, even the 100 year old mothballed Mirandas

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:21:18 PM

I've already admitted what my fav class is.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:21:21 PM

Mine is the Akira-class if we're limited to non STO (and Armitage), because it's combat/SAR focus means that I can do stuff like patrolling the core..

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:21:27 PM

And don't be afraid of the possibility a design sits there and collects dust.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:21:32 PM

but it might be severely out of it's depth in medical emergencies and science stuff

and therefore rely on the crew to make up the deficit.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:21:53 PM

This question got leveled at me during a PF monthly meeting - why bother writing up specs that could sit never used.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:22:18 PM

Ooof.

Allison 2/20/2021, 12:22:22 PM

One class of ship you rarely see used as a simm (at least in my opinion) however, is the Ambassador Class

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 12:22:25 PM

why climb a mountain that doesn't go anywhere?

Cos they're ugly

[PF] AlexM 2/20/2021, 12:22:36 PM

Because it's there.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:22:47 PM

That's a danger, but don't fall into that pit. It will depress you right out of doing the job. It may never see use, but one day, you just might have someone with the vision and drive to use it.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:22:49 PM

I mean, I see the point, it's a time consumption from people who may not want to spend the time (or have elsewhere to spend it), but yeah, you want it on file in case someone wants to use it.

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:22:51 PM

If you don't know the limits of a ship's design, you don't know just what that ship can do. Or am I thinking wrong?

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 12:22:54 PM

same with writing ship states

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:23:14 PM

And because it's on your menu, they'll bring that to your fleet. If they don't see it there, they might go on elsewhere.

And the discussion always opens doors regardless.

[PF] AlexM 2/20/2021, 12:23:34 PM

The issue with that particular question is that it was addressed to the person who wanted to spend the time working on it.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:23:39 PM

oh.

<_< Yeah, that's a different kettle of fish.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:24:32 PM

But don't be afraid of that possibility. At the very least, your efforts and work are on display and you learned more in your time doing it.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:25:31 PM

Its like world building in general. Write it, know it, even if its not used, it may enrich your world more than you realize.

It may enrich your players' lives and character backgrounds.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 12:25:57 PM

People could also pull it in and use it as an NPC ship 🙂

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:26:01 PM

So at the upper levels, don't accept a Mary Sue design. It should have flaws, it should have drawbacks. And go a step further if you have to - think of the kinds of crews that class would attract. Put it down in writing for others to see.

Cara Letsul 2/20/2021, 12:26:11 PM

From my days in table top games I built a world and have used it in various genres of games.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:26:34 PM

But also, and this important too - make sure the design fits the setting too

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:26:46 PM

Which is why I say, start with a ship already in service. Then improve and expand its uses, within reason of course.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:27:02 PM

Going back to that dreadnought - here's a question to ask: "How does this fit Starfleet's exploration mandate and existing doctrine?"

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:27:25 PM

Clearly, it's to map extremely hostile space [/s]

(like say, the Borg homeworld.)

Allison 2/20/2021, 12:27:36 PM

I think after the dominion war, Starfleet would have more combat ready ships

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:27:39 PM

I recently developed a serious pet peeve of seeing Starfleet ships using naval classifications like "Frigate", "Destroyer", "Battlecruiser"

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:27:40 PM

to act a mobile command center, perhaps.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:28:03 PM

All good points.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 12:28:27 PM

but the most combat oriented ship produced by Starfleet is the Defiant. That's a far cry from Dreadnaughts...

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:28:34 PM

But remember, Starfleet is an exploratory body first, defense agency second. It may forget that itself, and that can help in designs too.

And in other settings, the same applies.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:28:48 PM

I think a lot of the dreadnought inspired ships come from STO

which makes Starfleet *very* military

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 12:29:02 PM

Which is contrary to its core

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:29:16 PM

Agree, where combat is mostly the goal. But it doesn't always fit with Starfleet ethos.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:29:20 PM

I.. think that's a discussion I'd have in a different panel, honestly.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:29:25 PM

Ask yourself if this design fits with the New Republic or the Stargate Program or the Colonial Military.

If it stands out like a sore thumb, it's probably not quite ready for primetime yet.

I've followed The Chieftain, Wargaming US' historical specialist, and the importance of how something fits in how a military operates has been even further highlighted. It jars badly when you have something that doesn't fit how Starfleet (or the organization your ship is going to) normally operates.

So you don't need to be an expert in fleet doctrines and whatnot, just instead look at what organization is getting that design and ask "Would this fit in with how they do things normally" NOT "How would they change overnight to accommodate this"

But now that we've explored what's being served up at the table, let's look more at how you'll plate it up on your simm (and cringe as Cipher keeps trying to make food metaphors for some reason)

[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 12:33:41 PM

I think The Cipher is hungry

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:34:00 PM

At this rate, we should just call you Long Caster. (and if you get the joke, uh.. yay! if not, it's an Ace Combat joke.)

Allison 2/20/2021, 12:34:03 PM

Cipher is making me hungry....🙄

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:34:15 PM

Who's got the nibbles??

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:34:17 PM

So you're now the CO picking your ship. But the question soon becomes how to make your ship stand out. And I'll be honest, it's not something that will happen overnight, but you can get some ideas

Hand me those IFF codes. Oh and my sandwich 😛

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:34:58 PM

FOOD AGAIN???

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:35:08 PM

Think of it like a car you're getting.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:35:08 PM

Ah, so your handle WAS an Ace Combat reference

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:35:26 PM

A brand new one won't quite have a personality. Yet.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:35:32 PM

Anyway. I know of a ship that had it's CO spend money to commission beauty shots

[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 12:35:35 PM

I spent weeks agonising over my first command choice, only for it to not be available and have to settle for an 'Old' ship (Ambassador), her old girl persona became core to her in game

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:35:51 PM

An older used one may have one that you have yet to discover.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:36:19 PM

and to establish it's bridge. And that kinda shots + the first sim kinda established the feel, a refurbished DW era Galaxy ship.. with the DW era flourishes still there, a memorial to the dead in the Hangar Bay.. and I felt that established the feel a lot

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:36:48 PM

So it's not something you will know right away, and often times, as your sim grows and develops, as your missions start to find their theme and the crew their footing. But you always want to make your ship a part of the crew, because that's where you're all at.

Allison 2/20/2021, 12:36:50 PM

I'm on an Enterprise era simm and it's always a nice challenge to incorporate the lack of options it has compared to modern Starfleet ships

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:37:03 PM

Era has a lot to do, absolutely.

And it works both ways

[PF] AlexM 2/20/2021, 12:37:30 PM

Oh, I could probably do a whole panel on bridge design.

scribbles notes

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:37:42 PM

Haven't seen any NX 1's about.

Mikey- Rozia 2/20/2021, 12:37:53 PM

Makes me wish that we could redesign our ship's bridges, tbh

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:37:58 PM

An older ship is just like buying that older used cars. It has its own personality already, it's old, it's cranky, probably going to frustrate people but later become a labor of love.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 12:38:09 PM

There's 2 in Obsidian Fleet

Allison 2/20/2021, 12:38:21 PM

I'm on the NX Atlantis

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:38:40 PM

for context, the ship I'm on currently in 118 is very much meant to evoke a feeling of a workhorse, with no real flourshies, make-shift fixes using non SF parts, and a tempermental fourth nacelle, and I think a large part of making ships becoming

characters is allowing it to develop these quirks instead of fixing them to non existence.

[SC] Reece 2/20/2021, 12:38:44 PM

I've always liked the submarine in space aesthetic of Enterprise era ships.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:38:48 PM

And on the flipside, a new ship is like the new crew it's taking on - you have that time and room to grow together. Find your footing together.

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:38:48 PM

@Allison That was NX 2 wasn't it?

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:38:50 PM

(it's a Veritas-class, which I don't think is in use outside 118.)

[22] greenfelt 2/20/2021, 12:39:02 PM

I just joined 2 NX ships recently. I love the era.

Allison 2/20/2021, 12:39:21 PM

NX-05

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:39:24 PM

Just like a character, let your ship develop, find its identity along with your crew.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 12:39:32 PM

NX is basically just the ENT era version of NCC. So NX01 = only ever Enterprise itself.

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:40:15 PM

Oh sorry, lack of modern star trek knowledge showing through.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:41:26 PM

For example, the USS Hornet I command, she's a *Century*. Her backstory is Starfleet tried to break up her keel 4 times in 3 years because they wanted the materials for *Inquiries* after Utopia Planitia happened. And for a while, I struggled with this, but now, I've looked to her namesake. USS Hornet (CV-12) recovered not one but *two* Apollo missions, 11 and 12, upon their return to Earth. She's a name with history in war but also spaceflight.

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:41:35 PM

I mean when did any one pick the Sidney Class to sim on?

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:41:40 PM

And that might be where our direction goes.

You would be surprised. PF has a Raven-class sim. Never doubt the power of a niche sim.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:42:23 PM

a Century-class sim? That's pretty neat

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:42:27 PM

It does, and looks fun.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:42:29 PM

If you have to, look for inspiration where you can. Be it in the name, be it in your missions, anywhere.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:42:39 PM

118 right now has no new ship classes, although I suspect a California-class will be added in soon.

I think smaller niche sims have a lot of use in creativity. I actually almost joined a space station sim until I realized it was full up, and it was one of those without an attached ship

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:43:12 PM

But your ship isn't just a means from point A to point B. That's practically a crime.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:43:27 PM

We are running a Malachowski-class sim in SC.

Small, pretty niche as well.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:44:07 PM

We recently introduced the *California* and *Parliament* classes. Frankly, I would be stoked if someone took a *Parliament*, an Engineering-niche sim of doing large scale projects would be something to see I think.

[SC] Reece 2/20/2021, 12:44:10 PM

Pretty awesome too 😉

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:44:56 PM

Give your ship a chance to grow, and remember that the plan you set out with might change, just as all characters and stories do. But the worst thing that can happen is if something to the ship and *no one bats an eye*

Reminder 2/20/2021, 12:45:04 PM

This is your 15-minute warning

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 12:45:16 PM

(118 is a bit different though, in that COs don't pick from ship classes, they propose ships to get approved, so often, they have to come up with stats on the fly, etc.)

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:46:13 PM

Think of when a hero ship on screen was killed

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 12:46:38 PM

Who didn't gasp the first time they saw the Odyssey go up in smoke- by being rammed?

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:46:43 PM

USS Saratoga?

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:47:57 PM

That gut punch when Kirk sacrificed the *Enterprise* in ST3, or sharing Data's expression when the *Enterprise D* was crashing. Feeling no small amount of rage when the *Defiant* was left helpless and shot out from under Sisko's boots. And it wasn't easy seeing *Voyager* torn up in Year of Hell, even if we all knew it'd end with a reset.

When your ship gets beat up, and your crew sees it being put into the repair yard like a character being taken to sickbay, that's the goal.

When they mourn the loss of your ship for whatever reason you have to destroy it as if a favorite character died, that's the goal.

Cara Letsul 2/20/2021, 12:49:44 PM

I was on a sim where the ship crashed onto a planet, that was some brilliant and fun writing that was done.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:50:20 PM

The worst thing that can happen is that your crew only goes through the motions but otherwise could care less what happens to your ship because it didn't leave an impression.

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:50:46 PM

I always thought the idea was to miss the planets, until Voyager bounced onto one and got frozen.

Cara Letsul 2/20/2021, 12:51:55 PM

Going through the motion isn't a fun thing to happen.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:51:56 PM

And while I understand the decision to destroy a ship, sometimes you need a way to upgrade or change class, that shouldn't be met with "Meh, okay" that should start a

freakin' riot in your chat. (Well, not really, but you'll know they're that attached if you do)

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 12:52:13 PM

Considering how big space is, you have to put some work into hitting a planet

Cara Letsul 2/20/2021, 12:52:14 PM

Well we loved that ship and we worked to get it fixed.

The ship was brought down due to an alien influence.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:52:57 PM

And again, while we're obviously speaking mainly in Trek terms, the same can be applied to any setting.

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:53:26 PM

Like Dr. Who's Tardis getting wrecked.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:54:47 PM

Think of the *Millenium Falcon*, *Galactica*. Stargate never did establish the same kind of bond with the -303s and -304s, they were always taxis and that's not fair but the focus wasn't the same. But if you do make a Stargate sim set on a ship, then you should be absolutely insulted if someone calls your ship "SG1's taxi".

Reminder 2/20/2021, 12:55:05 PM

This is your 5-minute warning. Consider moving the conversation to the appropriate overflow room.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:56:13 PM

But in the end, we don't want Mary Sue characters, so don't accept anything less for your ships. At the fleet level, you owe it to your COs and players to offer good options, even if they are niche as all get out and may never see use. Your work is still on display and you never know who will come by in silence and look around.

And at the sim level, let your ship grow and develop with your crew. Help it find its identity just as your crew is finding theirs. The only wrong way is to force it or ignore it. After all, the ship's name is yours when it comes to your sim.

Lia 2/20/2021, 12:58:31 PM

And mine is the USS Elysium, I may only be the Security Chief but she's all mine.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 12:59:06 PM

And that's what anyone should come to feel on a ship.

[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 12:59:38 PM

Thank you for your panel @Cipherhornet18

Lia 2/20/2021, 1:00:09 PM

Yeah, thanks for that panel @Cipherhornet18, well done.

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 1:00:25 PM

At any rate, I do believe that's all the time I have. Thank you all for participating and hearing me out. I'll be around for questions off to the side (I think both overflows are being used).