

STAR TREK DISCOVERY

REVIEW

Illustrated by Jared Preble

'DISCOVERY' DIVES TOWARDS A DARKER FUTURE SUNDAY NIGHTS ON CBS ALL ACCESS

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To boldly go where no one has gone before.

These words can be found at the beginning of the two original "Star Trek" television series, "Star Trek," referred to as "The Original Series," and "The Next Generation," which followed 18 years after the original's conclusion. They evoke thoughts of exploration and "Discovery." And for the most part, each "Star Trek" series has lived up to this promise.

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The first series set in the "prime" universe since the cancellation of "Enterprise" in 2005, "Star Trek: Discovery" has big shoes to fill. Though the past decade has not been devoid of "Star Trek," with the J.J. Abrams' led reboot succeeding in drawing veterans and newcomers alike, the movies never seemed to capture the true nature of "Star Trek," with only the most recent release bringing that promised feeling of exploration and adventure that defined the television series. "Discovery" had a chance to recapture those elements.

Unfortunately, it doesn't take long for the series to prove that established Trek themes will not drive this iteration.

From the very first moments of "Discovery," the show's writers fail to follow established Trek lore. That is made evident from the many changes made to the Klingon race and to the introduction of the show's main protagonist, Michael Burnham (Sonequa Martin-Green). Michael and her Captain participate on an away mission to save the indigenous life on a desert planet, where they fail to follow the tenants of Starfleet's Prime Directive by willingly revealing themselves to the planet's alien species. These are not the last inconsistencies that appear in the first few episodes.

One of the most striking moments happens near the end of the second episode. After an extended battle, Michael's captain, Philippa Georgiou, portrayed by Michelle Yeoh, who guest stars in the first two episodes, chooses to transport a bomb onto an enemy's body floating through space. The enemy force, collecting their dead, transports the body into their ship and the bomb explodes, crippling the ship, allowing Michael and Philippa to board in an attempt to capture the enemy captain. This action, effectively desecrating the corpse of their enemy, flies in the face of many of Starfleet's established principles and is hardly discussed by the crew. Though it is not unheard of for the crew of the previous series to break from the rules and principles of Starfleet, it's always done with great reluctance, stressing the necessity of taking such actions.

Following this event, Michael is prosecuted for actions taken during the encounter, and even this event stands in stark contrast to similar events in previous series. The scene passes quickly, but the judges sit in shadows as they pass judgment over the former first officer. If the general tone of the first two episodes depict a darker Federation, scenes such as these cement the idea that this will not be the same Starfleet that has been depicted in the past. The introduction of the



Photo provided by CBS

The crew of the USS Shenzhou, the setting of the first two episodes of Discovery, which acts as a prequel to the rest of the season.

USS Discovery and its captain in episode three further illustrates this change.

Along with the other issues found in the show, there appears to be a lack of chemistry between the crew of the Discovery, with many of the character's interactions feeling awkward and forced. There is hope, though, as there are moments when the characters' potential shines through, such as with the interactions between Michael and First Officer Saru (Doug Jones) of the Discovery who was also a crew member on the ship she was previously assigned to. Saru and Michael play off each other well, with their interactions being some of the best moments in the first few episodes. Of all the members of the Discovery's crew, his character shows the most potential, the producers of the show describe him as "Discovery's" Spock or Data.

Despite its other failings, "Discovery" is

the most visually stunning of the "Star Trek" television series, rivaling even the Abrams' movies. Every depiction of space and the Starfleet and Klingon ships are beautifully crafted, allowing for more brutal depictions of ship-to-ship combat and breathtaking backdrops, easily becoming one of the show's biggest highlights.

As it stands, "Discovery" has a long way to go to prove it deserves to stand beside its namesake. The show's clear and numerous issues will likely cripple it if they are not resolved, but there does seem to be some potential within its rough exterior. It is not unusual for a "Star Trek" series to start off rough and improve as the run continues, and with any luck "Discovery" will follow that tradition. Perhaps, once more, "Star Trek" can lead us boldly into the future, into the final frontier.