Captains Log *- Stardate 47111.1 : A Federation listening post along the Romulan Neutral Zone has detected an unidentified vessel headed for Federation space. The Enterprise is moving to intercept.*

Another day and another crisis for the Federation. Yet what seems like business as usual for Captain Jean Luc Picard aboard his starship Enterprise, is just the beginning of an epic adventure across uncharted space involving a long since passed alien race, the quest for knowledge and the ever present Romulan threat.

This is Spectrum HoloByte's Star Trek: The Next Generation – A Final Unity. Released in May of 1995, it is an excellent example of adventure gaming in the 90's and one I would recommend to any fan of the genre. I was always a Star *Wars* kid growing up, but even I fell into the universe that is Star Trek.

Alot of effort was put into every aspect of this game from beginning to end, with the cinematics extremely detailed for its time, as well as including all the original voice actors from the TV series. In fact, on release STTNG was hailed for its quality cinematics and was considered the benchmark for performance for mid 1990's computer hardware.

Your adventure begins on the Bridge of the Enterprise and throws you straight into the everyday running of the ship. When on the Bridge, you have the option of visiting other areas of the ship or to converse with various members of the crew about the current situation. Throughout the game you have to talk to certain people to advance the plot e.g. at the beginning of the game you beam aboard some political refugees that you will need to exhaust all

dialogue with to find out your next action or destination. In past adventure titles I'd find myself skipping large amounts of text just to get the game moving, this wasn't the case for STTNG as the quality voice acting creating mood and tone for every scene. As a note, you can enable subtitles in the options menu, which I always find easier.

Gameplay is divided into two main areas - ship battles and point-and-click adventure, with difficulty affecting both sides of the fence providing a very innovative use of a difficulty system rarely seen in other games of the genre. The gameplay also appeals to both the hardcore Trekkie gamer as well as the casual adventurer with every part of the Enterprise, including the combat interface, allowing both manual and full auto control. This was a godsend for me as micro-managing every single system is not one of my strong points.

The "easy" difficulty takes control of every aspect of ship management including pre-selecting away teams and their inventory as well as assigning combat and engineering to Lt. Worf and Lt Cmdr La Forge respectively while the "hard" difficulty is the complete opposite, leaving everything up to you.

As with every adventure game, puzzles are everywhere and are mostly logical and easy to grasp. In the case you can't figure something out, the use of the Tricorder with different members of your party will generally give you the information you need to solve the puzzle. Speaking to every person you come across along the way, as well as looking at everything you come across is essential to complete each mission. There are also multiple paths each conversation can take, sometimes resulting in very different outcomes e.g you may solve an issue diplomatically or end up in a fire-fight, so be mindful with how you treat some characters you come across.

The gameplay, combat and cinematic visuals are exceptional and most scenes are extremely well detailed. It seems that the developers went above and beyond to create a totally immersive landscape for the player to actually *be* in.

My only gripe with the game is the quality of the audio. Sound effects, music and voice acting is choppy and sometimes all over the place, skipping and going out of tune. This is the case when running in MS-DOS or DOSBox and I have been unable to remedy this issue. The funny thing is, my memories of the game on release includes these quirks, so I wouldn't want to remove them if I could!
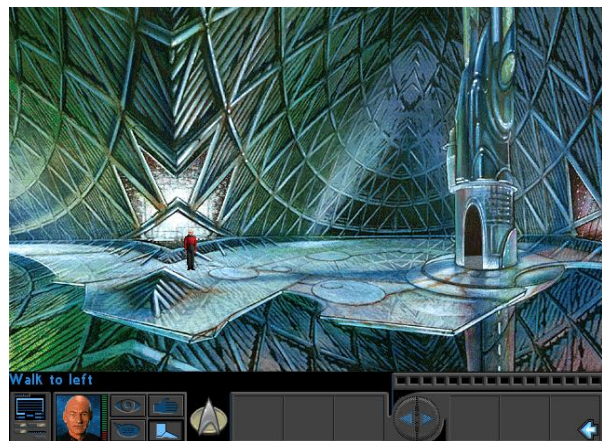
All in all, Star Trek: The Next Generation – A Final Unity is a must for any adventure nut. Trekkie or not, it's not a game to pass up and the recent release of it as abandonware makes now as good a time as any to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations. To boldly go where no one has gone before!

Score - 5/5