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'STAR TREK: DISCOVERY' 2017 CBS TV SERIES: EVERYTHING WE KNOW SO FAR

'Star Trek: Discovery' casts a captain, an alien, and an 'astromycologist'

By Rick Marshall — November 29, 2016 3:55 PM

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The first episode of *Star Trek* premiered 50 years ago, and the beloved sci-fi franchise is now scheduled to return to television in 2017 with a new series on Netflix and CBS — or more specifically, on [CBS All Access](#), the network's new stand-alone streaming service.

CBS unveiled the first teaser for its new *Star Trek* series in early 2016, and the show's official title was revealed to be *Star Trek: Discovery* during Comic-Con International in San Diego. With the latest movie (*Star Trek Beyond*) in theaters this past summer, many *Star Trek* fans are wondering exactly how the television series from executive producer Bryan Fuller (*Hannibal*, *Pushing Daisies*) and showrunners Gretchen Berg and Aaron Harberts (*Pushing Daisies*) will fit into the framework of the sci-fi franchise as it exists now.

Related: [CBS shows off *MacGyver*, *Star Trek*, and more new fall TV series](#)

Star Trek: Discovery was originally slated for a January release, but the network has pushed it back to May 2017. Here's everything else we know about the series so far.

Discovery's diversity

After months of speculation regarding the casting of the show's lead — a female actor who, according to Fuller, won't be the captain of the ship — we're still left to speculate just who will play the role. We do know, however, the identity of the first cast members of *Discovery*, including Michelle Yeoh, who may or may not fill the lead role. The casting of Yeoh was first teased by consulting producer and writer Nicholas Meyer, who also wrote and directed *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* and *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*.

"I know Michelle Yeoh is in it," Meyer told ComingSoon.net during a November 2016 interview. Yeoh will play Captain Georgiou, the leader of the Starship Shenzhou, another Starfleet vessel. It's unknown at this point how or if her character will become a part of the *Discovery*'s crew. Best known for portraying Yu Shu Lien in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and its recent sequel, *Sword of Destiny*, Yeoh also appeared in the Netflix series *Marco Polo* in a recurring role.



CBS later confirmed Yeoh's casting, and announced two more actors playing featured roles in the series: *Hellboy* and *Pan's Labyrinth* actor Doug Jones and *Rent* and *Dazed and Confused* actor Anthony Rapp.



According to [Mashable](#), Jones will play Lt. Saru, a science officer aboard the ship and a member of a new alien species that will be introduced to the Star Trek universe in *Discovery*. Rapp will play Lt. Stamets, another science officer aboard the *Discovery*, who will not only be the first original, openly gay Star Trek character, but also an astromycologist — which is apparently someone who studies fungus in space.



Fuller confirmed back in August 2016 that the series' cast would include at least one gay character, and told the crowd at the 2016 Television Critics Association (via CNN) that the casting choices were part of Star Trek's history of offering "a wonderful expression of diversity in its cast."

Previously, Fuller told [Ain't It Cool News](#) that a female lead character will be referred to as "Number One" throughout much of the first season.

"There have been six series all from the captains' perspective, and it felt like for this new iteration of *Star Trek*, we need to look at life on a Starfleet vessel from a new perspective," said Fuller of the reason the series will focus on someone *other* than the ship's captain. The showrunner promised that we'd learn the character's real name before the end of the season, though.

YOU CAN GO HOME AGAIN

When it comes to *Discovery*, we know quite a bit about who will be behind the camera — and there's plenty of *Star Trek* history there.

Fuller, who created the popular *Hannibal* series, got his start on television writing for *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Star Trek: Voyager*.

Along with Fuller and Meyer in both producer and creative roles on the series, Alex Kurtzman (the co-writer of the 2009 *Star Trek* movie that rebooted the franchise) and Eugene Roddenberry (the son of *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry) will serve as executive producers on the show.

Fuller and Kurtzman will pen the first one-hour episode of the series, with Meyer scripting the second episode.

It was announced (by [Deadline](#)) just before San Diego Comic-Con that the director of the first episode of the series will be David Semel, a two-time nominee for the Primetime Emmy Award who has a long history of directing the first episodes of celebrated series. Along with directing the pilot episodes of *Heroes* and *Person of Interest*, Semel is well known for directing episodes of *American Dreams*, *House*, and the pilot episode of the recent, acclaimed Amazon Studios series *The Man in the High Castle*.

TURBULENCE AT WARP SPEED

After months of serving as the showrunner and primary spokesperson for *Star Trek: Discovery*, Fuller announced plans to step down from his lead role on the creative team in October 2016 after preproduction delays pushed back the show's production schedule and put it into conflict with Fuller's other projects.

Fuller's departure was initially reported by [Variety](#), with Fuller himself later indicating that fellow executive producers Berg and Harberts would take over in the captain's chair.

Riker spent 7 years of TNG unready for Captaincy, [@GretchenJBerg](#) [@AaronHarberts](#) are ready. Thrilled to see them in command of the Bridge.

— Bryan Fuller (@BryanFuller) [October 27, 2016](#)

Fuller will reportedly stay on *Discovery* in an advisory role as well as his executive producer position, and his plan for the first season will still serve as the narrative road map for the series. He has already scripted the first two episodes of the series, and will continue to shepherd the project along during production. Fellow executive producer Akiva Goldsman is also expected to bring his Oscar-winning story expertise to the *Discovery* creative team in support of Berg and Harberts.

According to Variety, the factors that contributed to Fuller's departure also included tension over the slow progress of the series in assembling its cast, as well as the relatively high budget for the show. The series is reportedly budgeted at \$6 million to \$7 million per episode, which puts it on the same level as HBO's *Game of Thrones* and well above most other well-established shows on broadcast television.

Set phasers to 'binge'

According to Fuller (via [Collider](#)), the first season of *Star Trek: Discovery* will unfold over 13 episodes, telling one complete story over the course of the season instead of a new, self-contained story each episode. The structure lends itself to the increasingly popular binge-watching habits of the modern television audience, which makes sense given that the series will air on Netflix and the network's own streaming, on-demand video service.

"Ideally I would like to do 10 episodes."

According to Fuller, the series isn't likely to go beyond 13 episodes per season, and he'd actually like to see fewer episodes in a single season going forward.

"I would strongly recommend that we never do 26 episodes," he told [Ain't It Cool News](#) in August. "I think it would fatigue the show. Ideally, I would like to do 10 episodes. I think that's a tighter story."

One element of the show that was confirmed early on is the show's ties to [Netflix and the CBS All Access streaming service](#).

The series will premiere on the standard CBS television network in May 2017, but subsequent episodes will be available exclusively on CBS All Access (which requires a monthly subscription) for audiences in Canada and the U.S. In addition, the series will be available on Netflix for international audiences in 188 other countries. Netflix will reportedly get each episode within 24 hours of its premiere on CBS All Access.

The series' original January 2017 launch date was pushed to May to give the team ample time to produce the highest-quality show, according to the producers.

Speaking about the schedule change, Fuller had this to say: "We aim to dream big and deliver, and that means making sure the demands of physical and post-production for a show that takes place entirely in space, and the need to meet an air date, don't result in compromised quality. Before heading into production, we evaluated these realities with our partners at CBS and they agreed: *Star Trek* deserves the very best, and these extra few months will help us achieve a vision we can all be proud of."

Boldly going ... where, exactly?

CBS is keeping many of the story details for *Star Trek: Discovery* under wraps, but the first teaser promised "new crews," "new villains," "new heroes," and "new worlds" — suggesting that we'll see something that unfolds within the canon of the established *Star Trek* universe, but not directly tied to the events in the movies. During San Diego Comic-Con, another teaser for the series was released — this one featuring the "test flight" of the U.S.S. *Discovery*, the space-traveling base of operations for the cast.

First Look - Test Flight of Star Trek's U.S.S. Discovery



During September's Mission New York convention for Star Trek fans, Fuller shed some light on how the ship got its name.

"This ship is called the Discovery for a few reasons,," said Fuller. "Not the least of which is Stanley Kubrick's contribution to the Discovery on *2001: A Space Odyssey*, NASA's vessel the Discovery, and also the sense of discovery."

Noting a particular relationship between the word and the sci-fi series' fandom, Fuller added that another reason for the ship's name is "what the word 'discovery' means to Star Trek audiences who have been promised a future by Gene Roddenberry where we come together as a planet and seek new worlds and new alien races to explore and understand and collaborate with."

The first season of the series will be set ten years before the start of the original *Star Trek* television series, and unfold within the "Prime" universe (as opposed to the recently rebooted *Star Trek* movie universe).

"That gives us an opportunity to bridge the gap between *Enterprise* and the original series," Fuller said (via [CNN](#)) of the series' placement between the four-season prequel series *Star Trek: Enterprise* and the original 1966 series that spawned the entire franchise.

Fuller told [Ain't It Cool News](#) that the series could have theoretically unfolded in either the original "Prime" universe or the "Kelvin" timeline (the rebooted movie universe), but setting it in the Prime timeline allowed the creative team to avoid the need to coordinate with the big-screen creative team on the continuity.

"The timeline was relatively inconsequential."

"Really when we developed the story it could take place in either Prime or Kelvin so the timeline was relatively inconsequential," he explained. "But there was the cleanliness of keeping our series independent of the films. That way we don't have to track anything [happening in the movie universe]

and they don't have to track what we're doing. And you can have two distinct universes — one where Sulu is straight and one where Sulu is gay."

Early [rumors](#) suggested that the series will be an anthology project of some sort, akin to *American Horror Story* or *Fargo*, with each season set in a different point in the Star Trek timeline and featuring different characters and cast members.

The latest news also confirms what CBS has made clear since the beginning: the series won't be a spinoff of [Star Trek Beyond](#) and the rebooted franchise, so don't expect any Marvel-style cinematic tie-ins with the rebooted film franchise.

Update 11-29-2016 by Rick Marshall: Added confirmation of Yeoh's casting and announcement of Doug Jones and Anthony Rapp joining the cast.



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