

= First Flight (Star Trek : Enterprise) =

" First Flight " is the fiftieth episode of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : Enterprise , the twenty @-@ fourth episode of the second season . It first aired on May 14 , 2003 on UPN . It was written by John Shiban and Chris Black , and was directed by Star Trek : The Next Generation actor LeVar Burton (Geordi La Forge) .

Set in the 22nd century , the series follows the adventures of the first Starfleet starship Enterprise , registration NX @-@ 01 . In this episode , after Captain Jonathan Archer (Scott Bakula) is informed of the death of his former colleague , A. G. Robinson (Keith Carradine) , he relates the story of breaking the warp 2 @.@ 5 barrier to T 'Pol (Jolene Blalock) whilst investigating a dark matter nebula .

The episode was inspired by the story of the first American astronauts as seen in the film The Right Stuff . Several sets were specifically built for this episode , and a reference to the designer of the Enterprise from Star Trek : The Original Series is included in the story . Three crew @-@ members from the U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CVN @-@ 65) appeared in this episode , and handed over a flag from the ship to the cast and crew . Critical reception to this episode was mostly positive , with praise directed at Scott Bakula . However , the episode received the second lowest number of viewers received by Enterprise at that point , which was blamed on it being aired opposite the series finale of Dawson 's Creek .

= = Plot = =

As Enterprise is about to investigate a dark matter cloud , Captain Archer is informed by Admiral Forrest that his former Starfleet colleague , Captain Robinson , has died in a rock climbing accident . Archer , seeking solitude , desires to travel into the nebula in a shuttlepod armed with spatial charges to excite the dark matter . Sub @-@ Commander T 'Pol , noting that captains are prohibited from traveling off @-@ ship unaccompanied , joins him and while underway , she coaxes him into relating the story of the Warp 5 program on Earth .

In a series of flashbacks , Commander Archer meets with Commodore Forest , and is informed that although he excelled in simulations , his colleague Commander Robinson has been awarded the test ship , the NX Alpha . Disappointed , Archer goes to the 602 Club , a local bar , bumping into Robinson there . Later , Robinson takes the scheduled flight aboard the NX Alpha , breaking the warp 2 @.@ 0 barrier . He refuses a command from Forest to stop and instead increases speed ; the craft soon destabilizes and is destroyed as it approaches warp 2 @.@ 2 , but Robinson escapes . The Vulcans argue that the warp program should be postponed , but Archer wants the program , and his father 's engine research , to continue . Archer , and his new friend Lieutenant Tucker , then go to the 602 Club to discuss the problem . Robinson arrives and blames Archer 's father , and the two end up in a fist fight .

The next day Archer discovers Robinson packing up the contents of his locker . He concedes that it is primarily an intermix problem , but that the engine could still work . Archer and Robinson then steal the NX Beta , with Tucker in flight control , but it starts to suffer the same issues as the Alpha . As Starfleet security detains Tucker , Archer and Robinson manage to coax the engines towards their goal of warp 2 @.@ 5 . Afterwards , Archer and Robinson are reprimanded by Starfleet , and the Vulcans ground the program for a year , but they eventually confirm that his father 's design was sound . Back in the future , Archer launches the charges into the cloud , and T 'Pol suggests that it be named after Archer 's close friend , Robinson .

= = Production = =

" First Flight " was inspired by the 1983 film The Right Stuff , the story of the test pilots at Edwards Air Force Base and the first NASA astronauts . Reference is also made to the Apollo 11 lunar landing , when Archer mentions that no @-@ one remembers astronaut Buzz Aldrin 's first words when he stepped onto the moon . His actual first words were " Looks like the secondary strut had a

little thermal effects on it right here , Neil . "

Warp drive was first mentioned in Gene Roddenberry 's first @-@ draft pitch for Star Trek , dated March 11 , 1964 , although in that version it was referred to as a " space @-@ warp drive " . The drive allows for a vessel to travel faster than the speed of light by warping space @-@ time around the ship itself . In 1994 , physicist Miguel Alcubierre created the theoretical Alcubierre drive , which used a similar theory . In the Star Trek universe , Zefram Cochrane invented the drive in 2063 . Cochrane was portrayed by James Cromwell in the film Star Trek : First Contact and re @-@ appeared in this role in the pilot of Enterprise , " Broken Bow " . That episode showed the culmination of the development of the warp 5 engine , which was designed by Jonathan Archer 's father , Henry , in the launch of the Enterprise itself . The Vulcans during this period gave oversight and advice to Starfleet in the development of the warp drive , but sought to slow the progress of the humans . " First Flight " showed a previously unseen period in the development of the fictional warp drive , with the pursuit of the warp 2 barrier . The dark matter seen in this episode is a real phenomenon , however it is unclear exactly what it is . It cannot be seen by telescopes , and it is theorised that it makes up a great deal of the matter in the universe .

John Shiban and Chris Black wrote " First Flight " , the fiftieth episode of Enterprise . Former Star Trek : The Next Generation actor LeVar Burton directed the episode , his second of the season and fourth overall . He had previously directed episodes of other shows in the franchise , including the hundredth episode of Star Trek : Voyager , " Timeless " . In this episode , Tucker states that his commanding officer at the testing facility is Captain Jefferies , this is a direct reference to Matt Jefferies , designer of the original USS Enterprise (NCC @-@ 1701) . Jefferies died two months after the episode was aired .

Production began on March 10 , 2003 , and concluded on March 18 . The first days ' shoot consisted of scenes in the shuttlepod with Blalock and Bakula as other members of the cast were still shooting scenes for the episodes " Horizon " and " Regeneration " . The present @-@ day scenes were completed on the second day of filming , with the remaining five days of shooting being devoted to the flashback scenes . Sets were built specifically for this episode , including the NX Command Center , the 602 Club and the interior of the NX prototype vessels .

= = = Casting = = =

The guest cast in " First Flight " included the return of Vaughn Armstrong in the recurring role of Admiral Forrest , although this was his most demanding shoot so far , requiring him to be on set for five of the seven days of filming . Keith Carradine was cast as A. G. Robinson ; Carradine is also a musician , and won the Academy Award for Best Original Song for " I 'm Easy " from the 1975 film Nashville . He is also the half @-@ brother of fellow actor David Carradine . This episode also saw the return of some actors who had appeared in other series of the Star Trek franchise . These included Michael Canavan , who appeared in this episode as a Vulcan advisor , but previously appeared in the Star Trek : Deep Space Nine episode " Defiant " as a member of the Maquis terrorist group . Also appearing in " First Flight " was Victor Bevine . He had previously appeared in DS9 , Voyager and the movie Star Trek : First Contact .

" First Flight " also provided the stage for an exchange with the United States Navy aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CVN @-@ 65) . Three crew members of the real @-@ life Enterprise had been voted as " Sailors of the Year " by the U.S. Navy , and so were given the roles of extras in this episode . This was not the first time such an exchange had occurred ; previous winners had appeared as crew members on board the fictional Enterprise in the episode " Desert Crossing " . However , this time around they were given roles at the NX Command Center instead . Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 2nd Class James D. Frey portrayed a technician , Navy Counselor 1st Class Kathleen J. Grant played a Senator and Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Thomas P. Hunt was the Senator 's assistant . All three were pleased to be appearing on the show , with Grant saying that " My nephew told all of the kids at his school his aunt was going to be on Star Trek . That makes the experience even more of a thrill for me " , and Hunt saying " This will be on reruns for years to come , when I 'm 60 , I 'll be able to say , ' Hey , that 's me on Enterprise . ' " . In return , the

three sailors presented the cast and crew of Star Trek : Enterprise with a flag that had been flying on the aircraft carrier earlier in the month .

= = Reception and home media release = =

" First Flight " was first shown in the United States on May 14 , 2003 on UPN . It was aired on the same night as the following episode , " Bounty " . Both episodes saw a reduction in viewing figures compared to previous weeks , which was attributed to them being broadcast at the same time as the series finale of Dawson 's Creek on The WB . " First Flight " received a 2 @. @ 4 / 4 % share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 2 @. @ 4 percent of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds , and 4 percent of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . It was the second lowest rating received by the series at that point , and " Bounty " received a slightly decreased rating of 2 @. @ 3 / 4 % , but the viewing figures were higher . Bounty was watched by 3 @. @ 54 million reviewers , whereas " First Flight " was watched by 3 @. @ 3 million . " First Flight " was the 93rd most watched programme of the evening . The episode aired during the following week was the season two finale , whose figures rebounded slightly ; " The Expanse " had a final rating of 2 @. @ 8 / 4 % with an audience of 3 @. @ 88 million .

Michelle Erica Green reviewed the episode for TrekNation , and thought that Scott Bakula in particular gave one of his best performances of the show so far . Both he and Carradine worked well together , but thought that the other characters in the flashback were clichéd . Overall , she thought it was a " superbly filmed episode " with several new sets which were well used , and the visual effects were good . Jamahl Epsicokhan at his website " Jammer 's Reviews " gave the episode a score of three out of four , saying that he welcomed the back story to the series being fleshed out in this episode . He thought that the episode itself wasn 't very challenging to watch , but thought that the melancholy ending was fitting . He even thought that it might be worthwhile to go further back in time to see the actual founding of Starfleet .

" First Flight " was first released for home media use on DVD as part of the second series box set of Star Trek : Enterprise . The release featured text commentary on the episode from Star Trek and NASA designers Michael and Denise Okuda . The episode also featured as one of the three Enterprise episodes on the Star Trek Fan Collective DVD Set " Captain 's Log " . The set featured episodes selected by each of the Captains from the Star Trek series , and several chosen by the fans , a total of seventeen episodes . A release on Blu @- @ ray Disc for season two occurred on August 20 , 2013 .