

= Cause and Effect (Star Trek : The Next Generation) =

" Cause and Effect " is the 18th episode of the fifth season of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : The Next Generation , the 118th overall . It was originally released on March 23 , 1992 , in broadcast syndication . It was written by Brannon Braga , who sought to write an unusual type of time travel related plot , and directed by cast member Jonathan Frakes .

Set in the 24th century , the series follows the adventures of the crew of the Federation starship Enterprise . In this episode , the Enterprise is caught in a time loop which results in the destruction of the ship and the loss of all hands after a collision with the USS Bozeman . As events re @-@ occur , they begin to feel a sense of déjà vu and upon investigating , realize their predicament . Lt. Commander Data (Brent Spiner) realizes how to pass a brief message to himself in the next loop , which allows him to save the ship from destruction .

Cheers actor Kelsey Grammer was offered the role of Captain Morgan Bateson and accepted . Due to scheduling conflicts , Kirstie Alley was unable to appear in her Star Trek II : The Wrath of Khan role as Lt. Saavik . Plans for the USS Bozeman were changed due to the budget , which resulted in a modification to the USS Reliant model created for The Wrath of Khan and the use of the movie @-@ era Enterprise bridge . " Cause and Effect " received Nielsen ratings of 13 @. @ 0 percent , making it the sixth most watched episode of the season . Critics praised the episode , specifically the opening sequence in which the Enterprise is destroyed , the writing of Braga and the direction of Frakes .

= = Plot = =

The viewer is shown through the episode that Enterprise is caught in a time loop (referred to in @-@ universe as a " temporal causality loop ") . The loop begins with the senior members of the crew playing poker and continues for about a day when they discover a spatial anomaly . While studying the anomaly , a ship suddenly emerges from it , and though Captain Jean @-@ Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) takes Lt. Commander Data 's (Brent Spiner) advice over Commander William T. Riker 's (Jonathan Frakes) for avoiding a collision , the new ship clips the warp nacelle , causing a critical failure and the destruction of the Enterprise moments later , at which point the loop restarts .

Initially , the crew are unaware of the loop . However , Dr. Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) begins to hear noises before she goes to bed following the poker game . Having a sense of déjà vu during the poker game and able to predict the cards Data will deal during a subsequent loop , Crusher takes a tricorder with her to her room , records the voices , and later analyzes them to discover they are the panicked commands and broadcasts of the crew . The senior staff work out that they are stuck in the loop ; the voices they are hearing are those of themselves from the previous loop just prior to the destruction of the ship . They evaluate the voices to determine that the loop is restarted due to the collision of the two ships but do not know how to avoid that collision in the first place . Data suggests that his positronic brain can be used to send a short message to himself in the next loop which may help them to avoid the collision . When they arrive at the anomaly , and after the collision , Data sends the message .

On the following loop , Crusher again has a feeling of déjà vu during the poker game , but when Data deals the next hand , all the cards are threes , followed by a hand where all players have three of a kind . The number 3 begins appearing throughout other parts of the ship 's operations while , again , they determine they are stuck in a time loop . When they reach the anomaly and the ship appears from it , Data suddenly realizes that the 3 stands for the number of command pips on Riker 's uniform , and executes Riker 's option instead of his own . This allows Enterprise to safely clear the oncoming ship . The anomaly disappears and the time loop ends , and the crew realize they have been trapped in the loop for over 17 days , while the other ship , the USS Bozeman , has been missing for over 90 years . Picard welcomes the Bozeman 's crew to the 24th century .

= = Production = =

The script was written by Brannon Braga , who sought to write a time @-@ travel related episode without using a " screwed up time @-@ lines " type plot . Braga called it the most enjoyable episode he wrote all season , as he had never seen a timeloop episode before but he did not know how to get the crew out of the loop , nor what the message was which would be passed to a future loop . The poker game was not in the original plan , which he attributed to a sugar rush after eating pancakes . He felt that the destruction of the Enterprise was the best possible teaser for the episode , and he was pleased how he managed to tie the poker game into the overall plot . Braga named the USS Bozeman for his hometown of Bozeman , Montana , while the registration number of NCC @-@ 1941 was a reference to the 1979 film 1941 .

Cast member Jonathan Frakes directed the episode , having prepared for it while shooting the episode " The Outcast " . He said that he was not involved in the casting process , as they had offered the role of Captain Morgan Bateson to Kelsey Grammar , who 'd accepted . Grammar was a Star Trek fan , and in his role as Frasier Crane on Cheers , he filmed on the Paramount lot near where The Next Generation was produced . Frakes found it a challenge to film the same scenes with the same dialogue over and over but in a way which made them look different . Marvin V. Rush , the director of photography , worked with cameraman Waverly Smothers to develop an attachment for a camera using a bungee cord which allowed for a different style of shooting . Frakes also worked while at home planning out shots in order to ensure that there was a variety to each loop . Executive producer had made it clear that Frakes could not re @-@ use footage and each loop needed to be filmed fresh , in order to prevent the episode from looking like a clip show .

Several changes took place to the script because of filming and casting difficulties . The crew planned to make the USS Bozeman a Star Trek : The Original Series @-@ era Constitution class ship , similar to the original USS Enterprise . However , no model was available to use and the costs in creating a new one , along with costumes and props , was prohibitive enough that the plan was scrapped . Instead , the USS Reliant model created for Star Trek II : The Wrath of Khan was used . Greg Jein and Michael Okuda made the relevant changes , removing the rollbar and adding sensor arrays , resulting in it being described as a Soyuz class vessel . The bridge of the Bozeman was a re @-@ dressed version of the film series Enterprise bridge . It was then intended to get Kirstie Alley in a cameo role behind Grammer in the USS Bozeman shots , reprising her role as Lt. Saavik from the movie The Wrath of Khan , but could not do so due to scheduling difficulties . Rob Legato organized the large scale miniature effects for the episode on set 10 , with large scale but low detailed versions of the Enterprise created along with just nacelle models for the Bozeman to collide with .

= = Reception and home media release = =

The episode aired during the week commencing May 10 , 1992 , in broadcast syndication . According to Nielsen Media Research , it received ratings of 13 @. @ 0 percent . This means that it was watched by 13 percent of all households watching television during its timeslot . It was the sixth most watched episode of the season , behind both parts of " Unification " , " A Matter of Time " , " Power Play " and " The Game " .

James Van Hise in his book The Unauthorized Trek : The Complete Next Generation , said that the episode " fascinated " him due to the " experimental " nature . He praised the direction of Frakes , who saved it from being a series of " potentially boring repetition [s] " , adding that he " clearly has a firm grasp on the series . " Juliette Harrison listed " Cause and Effect " as the seventh most groundbreaking episode of the series in 2012 for Den of Geek . Keith DeCandido reviewed the episode for Tor.com , giving it a rating of nine out of ten . He praised the means in which Frakes made each repetition different , and the writing by Braga which he described as a " tour de force " . He said that " Cause and Effect " had " the best teaser in the history of Star Trek " , and summed it up by saying " This is an absolute triumph of craft from both Braga and Frakes , and just a fun episode , with the added bonus of Captain Frasier Crane at the end . I almost didn 't need to rewatch this one , as it ? s one of my go @-@ to episodes when I want to watch a Star Trek episode for the heck of it , and I have yet to tire of it . "

Zack Handlen gave " Cause and Effect " a grade of A in his review for The A.V. Club . He called the opening sequence " strong " , and said that one of the " tricks " of this episode was that it does not break its own rules in finding a resolution . He summarized by saying " Once again , TNG does what it does best : You take an ostensibly goofy idea , and then you make it sting by thinking through the consequences . " In a list of the top 100 episodes of the Star Trek franchise , " Cause and Effect " was placed in 62nd place by Charlie Jane Anders at io9 .

Viviane Casimir published an article in the Winter 1997 issue of the journal Extrapolation that used Lieutenant Commander Data 's ability to transmit a message to himself as an example of assigning special mental abilities to a cyborg . In Computers Of Star Trek Lois Gresh and Robert Weinberg noted a contradiction between the description of Data being built around a neural net and examples of traditional von Neumann architecture . They noted how , in " Cause and Effect " , when a crew member removed the cover to Data 's " brain " , it exposed flashing lights reminiscent of the large computers of the fifties and sixties , that reflected the values in the CPUs accumulator and other registers .

" Cause and Effect " was first released on VHS cassette in the United States and Canada on June 10 , 1997 . The episode was later released in the United States on September 3 , 2002 , as part of the Star Trek : The Next Generation season four DVD box set . The first Blu @-@ ray release was in the United Kingdom on July 29 , 2013 , followed by the United States on July 30 . Elements of the episode were expanded upon in several non @-@ canon novels . In Ship of the Line by Diane Carey followed up on the events of " Cause and Effect " . Captain Bateson also appears in several more books set before and after the events of this episode , including The Captain 's Daughter by Peter David and the Star Trek : Destiny novel Lost Souls .