

= I , Borg =

" I , Borg " is the 23rd episode of the fifth season of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : The Next Generation , the 123rd overall . It was originally released on May 10 , 1992 , in broadcast syndication . The episode was written by René Echevarria , with an uncredited assist from executive producer Jeri Taylor . It was directed by Robert Lederman , the film editor for The Next Generation , one of two directing credits he received during the course of the season .

Set in the 24th century , the series follows the adventures of the crew of the Federation starship Enterprise . In this episode , an injured Borg drone (Jonathan Del Arco) is found amid a crashed scout ship . As they restore him to health , the crew must decide whether or not to develop him as a weapon of mass destruction against the Borg , but when he demonstrates free will , they must question that decision .

The writers had problems bringing back the Borg due to their apparent near @-@ invincibility . The idea for " I , Borg " was well received among the staff , with Taylor comparing it to the film Edward Scissorhands . The episode also saw a development in the make @-@ up design for the Borg by Michael Westmore 's team . Del Arco was deliberately antisocial prior to his audition in order to enter Hugh 's mindset , but at the same time sought to use the innocence and wonderment generated by a friend 's death as Hugh 's voice . He was pleased when the character later returned in the two @-@ part episode " Descent " . The episode received Nielsen ratings of 12 @. @ 8 percent , and critics were positive with praise directed at both Del Arco and Whoopi Goldberg , as well as the general nature of the plot .

= = Plot = =

The crew discover a wrecked Borg scout ship with a single survivor : a young Borg drone . Dr. Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) insists on treating the surviving Borg despite the concerns of Captain Jean @-@ Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) . On Picard 's orders , the drone is confined and monitored by security forces at all times and is prevented from contacting the Borg Collective . Chief Engineer Geordi La Forge (LeVar Burton) and Lt. Commander Data assist Crusher in bringing the Borg back to health . As they come to understand the workings of the Borg , La Forge and Data postulate an idea of using the Borg drone as a weapon of mass destruction . By implanting an unsolvable geometric formula into his mind and returning him back to the Collective , the formula should rapidly spread (similar to a computer virus) and disable the Borg . Crusher is aghast at this suggestion , considering it equivalent to genocide , while Picard and the other senior crew deliberate on the ethics of this plan .

The Borg drone initially calls himself " Third of Five " , but ends up referring to and understanding himself as " Hugh " ? the name given to him by La Forge . Hugh discusses how the Borg only wish to learn about other cultures through assimilation , but La Forge counters this argument , discussing aspects of individuality that make them human and unique . In further debates , La Forge finds himself becoming a friend to Hugh , and begins to doubt his previous idea . This is further complicated when Hugh shows elements of individualism . The crew now debate whether it is appropriate to sacrifice one individual to protect the majority , though Picard is still insistent on destroying the Collective . Crusher and La Forge arrange to have Guinan (Whoopi Goldberg) , who has a similar loathing for the Borg because they destroyed her homeworld , speak to Hugh .

She finds Hugh to be not a mindless drone but a confused young man , and she agrees Hugh is no longer a Borg . Guinan convinces Picard to meet with Hugh , as well , and Picard comes to the same conclusion , in part because Hugh refers to himself as " I " instead of the Borg 's collective " we " during their discussion . Picard abandons the proposed plan and instead offers Hugh asylum within the Federation . Hugh expresses enthusiasm at the prospect of remaining with La Forge but ultimately refuses , recognizing that the Borg will still come looking for him . He offers to be returned to the crash site , where he will be found and re @-@ assimilated by the Borg . Picard hopes that , once Hugh is reconnected , the sense of individualism Hugh has learned will spread throughout the Collective . La Forge accompanies Hugh to the crash site and , from a safe distance , watches the

Borg recover him . Just as the Borg transport out , Hugh turns to give La Forge a parting glance .

= = Production = =

Following the Borg @-@ based two @-@ part episode " The Best of Both Worlds " , the production team were having difficulty in introducing the Borg to the series due to their unstoppable nature . The story idea for " I , Borg " was well received by the production staff , with executive producer Rick Berman saying that he " fell in love " with the characterisations of Guinan , Picard , La Forge and Hugh which resulted in a series of two character scenes in the episode . Story editor René Echevarria wrote the script , with a uncredited assist from executive producer Jeri Taylor . She compared the idea to the 1990 film *Edward Scissorhands* , saying that she felt it would become a " classic " and that the Borg " would never be the same again " . Michael Piller , who wrote the " The Best of Both Worlds " , described " I , Borg " as having a " great premise which forces Guinan and Picard to face their own prejudices " . He said it was his favourite of the season .

The episode was directed by Robert Lederman , his first of the series and the only new director during the fifth season . Lederman was also the film editor on the series , and would go on to also direct the episode " Force of Nature " . " I , Borg " also marked the first time that Jay Chattaway scored a Borg related episode , but would continue to do so for the rest of the series and during *Star Trek : Voyager* .

= = = Design and casting of Hugh = = =

The design of the Borg prosthetics as used in " I , Borg " was an evolution from those previously seen in the series . Michael Westmore 's make @-@ up team developed a removable eye @-@ piece for Hugh , using magnets to allow the actor to remove it as required by the script . The team wanted the eye @-@ piece to be dramatic , but decided against using a laser as this had been previously used for Locutus of Borg . They instead opted for a hologram and a series of LEDs that were powered by a battery pack built into the costume and mounted on the actor 's back . The arm piece was also redeveloped ; rather than a single " club " piece as previously used for the Borg , it was built from a foam @-@ rubber glove with attachments .

Jonathan Del Arco had no concept of what a Borg was prior to the audition . He received his script on the evening prior to meeting with the producers and felt that it gave him a decent sense of the character . Instead , Del Arco later explained that he was deliberately anti @-@ social towards the other actors at the audition in order to get into Hugh 's mindset . When he performed for the producers , someone else read the lines assigned to Picard and La Forge , and he felt like he immediately got a positive result . He received a call back , and returned to audition once more .

He said that his performance in " I , Borg " was driven by the memories of watching a childhood friend die , and the innocence that he felt given to his friends memory over time ; " When I first read the script . I heard his voice , that 's what it sounded like ? full of wonderment and confusion about everything . That , to me , was Hugh . " Following his appearance in the episode , he later pitched a couple of story ideas to the producers to feature the return of Hugh . He was happy when the character later returned in the sixth season finale / seventh season opener " Descent " , which he felt was similar to his previous ideas .

= = 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 12 @.@ 8 percent . This means that it was watched by 12 @.@ 8 percent of all households watching television during its timeslot . It was the seventh most watched episode of the season , behind both parts of " Unification " , " A Matter of Time " , " Power Play " , " Cause and Effect " and " The Game " .

Keith DeCandido in his review for *Tor.com* gave the episode a score of 8 out of 10 , and described Goldberg 's appearance as " particularly good " , while Del Arco was said to be " spectacular " in his

" subtle , powerful performance " . DeCandido criticised the " defanging " of the Borg , but understood why the writers took the approach they did as a near @-@ unstoppable enemy is difficult to write for . He praised the characterisations , specifically for Crusher , and added " it ? s never a bad thing when TNG actually remembers its character continuity " . James van Hise , in his book *The Complete Trek : The Next Generation* , said that the episode " enriched the creative tapestry of the series " and gave the writers a number of possibilities for following it up .

Sven Harvey included " I , Borg " in a list of 25 " must watch " episodes of the series compiled for *Den of Geek* , describing it as " a wonderfully written and executed episode which lays a path for later developments " . Zack Handlen gave " I , Borg " a grade of A- in his review for the *A.V. Club* , and while he was disappointed that the Borg were made less " nightmarish " , the question of genocide that hung over the episode and the expansion of potential story ideas from the plot made it worth it .

" I , Borg " was first released on VHS cassette in the United States and Canada on October 7 , 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 . It was subsequently released as part of the *Star Trek : Fan Collective ? Borg* collection on DVD , which brought together the Borg @-@ themed episodes from *The Next Generation* , *Voyager* and *Star Trek : Enterprise* . The first Blu Ray release was in the United Kingdom on July 29 , 2013 , followed by the United States on July 30 .