

= Observer Effect (Star Trek : Enterprise) =

" Observer Effect " is the eleventh episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : Enterprise and the eighty @-@ eighth overall . It was first aired on January 21 , 2005 , on UPN . It was written by Judith and Garfield Reeves @-@ Stevens , and directed by Mike Vejar . Set in the 22nd century , the series follows the adventures of the first Starfleet starship , Enterprise , registration NX @-@ 01 . This episode sees alien entities test the Enterprise crew by observing their reactions to a deadly silicon @-@ based infection . Actual first contact with these aliens ? the Organians ? would occur about a century later , during the events of the Star Trek : The Original Series episode " Errand of Mercy " .

As it was a bottle episode , the episode did not use any additional sets or guest stars with the intention of cutting down on costs for the series . This also gave time for the visual effects team to finish earlier work . The episode received mixed reactions from critics , with praise directed at the links to The Original Series , while criticism directed towards some of the characterization of the characters . " Observer Effect " was watched by 2 @.@ 76 million viewers on first broadcast , which formed part of an overall drop of viewers for the series .

= = Plot = =

Lieutenant Reed (Dominic Keating) and Ensign Mayweather (Anthony Montgomery) play chess while serving as hosts to non @-@ corporeal aliens . Returning from an away mission on the planet below , Commander Tucker (Connor Trinneer) and Ensign Sato (Linda Park) soon exhibit symptoms of a strange disease . Upon examination by Doctor Phlox (John Billingsley) , it is found to be a highly contagious silicon @-@ based virus , and Captain Archer (Scott Bakula) explains that Commander T 'Pol (Jolene Blalock) and Phlox are seeking a cure . To pass the time , while isolated in Decontamination , the two try to learn more about each other .

The aliens take a keen interest examining the human response to this crisis , and compare notes to previous reactions by Klingons and Cardassians . They are members of an advanced species looking to make " first contact " . So far , based on 10 @,@ 000 years of observations , no species has been deemed ready . Seeking a different view of the crew , they temporarily shift to the bodies of Phlox , T 'Pol , and Archer . A difference in opinion between the two aliens starts to form : one seems determined to maintain their non @-@ interference protocol , while the other feels the protocol is outdated and unnecessary .

With time running out , Phlox and T 'Pol find a way to disrupt the virus using deadly levels of radiation . Archer and Phlox , while wearing environmental suits , escort Tucker and Sato to Sickbay for treatment . Sato soon goes into cardiac @-@ arrest , and Archer removes his gloves and helmet to assist her , but she cannot be resuscitated . They then administer a dose of radiation to Tucker , but that too is ineffective . Phlox then leaves to resume work from the Bridge . Suddenly , Tucker and Sato are reanimated by the aliens , who ? while possessing the crewmen ? explain the situation to a surprised Archer , who then makes an impassioned speech on behalf of his crew . The aliens decide to modify their procedures , choosing to resurrect and cure the infected crew members , when they previously would have left them to die . The aliens erase the encounter from crew 's memory . Archer orders a warning beacon to be placed above the planet , and the aliens leave to begin planning first contact with more advanced humans at a later time .

= = Production = =

" Observer Effect " was created as a bottle episode , the second in a row after " Daedalus " . These episodes were intended to reduce costs on the series by not requiring additional set production . Unlike the " Daedalus " , " Observer Effect " also did not use any guest actors . It was the second to be written by Judith and Garfield Reeves @-@ Stevens , who wrote a plot which brought back the Organians from the Star Trek : The Original Series episode " Errand of Mercy " . The Organians were originally created for The Original Series by Gene L. Coon , and were intended as a balance to

the Klingons . Mind replacement or mind invasion plotlines are common in science fiction . Other episodes in the Star Trek franchise exploring the theme include " Wolf in the Fold " and " Turnabout Intruder " from The Original Series , " Sub Rosa " from Star Trek : The Next Generation and " Cathexis " from Star Trek : Voyager .

This was one of show runner Manny Coto 's deliberate moves to link Enterprise closer to The Original Series during the fourth season . It was the second time that the crew of the Enterprise (NX @-@ 01) had met non @-@ corporal entities following the second season episode " The Crossing " . Filming began on the episode on October 22 , 2004 , and continued for the following seven working days . While the makeup department needed to present Park 's and Trinneer 's characters as they progressed through the sickness introduced by the Organians , the visual effects team was freed up to complete production on earlier episodes .

= = Reception and home media release = =

" Observer Effect " was first broadcast in the United States on January 21 , 2005 , on UPN . It was watched by 2 @.@ 76 million viewers , which was a decrease from the 3 @.@ 03 million who watched " Daedalus " but more than the 2 @.@ 53 million viewers for the following episode , " Babel One " . Writing for The A.V. Club in 2014 , Alasdair Wilkins included " Observer Effect " in his list of the twenty best episodes of the series .

Jamahl Epsicokhan , at his website Jammer 's Reviews , described the plot of " Observer Effect " as not being as predictable as it might initially seem due to the crew 's inability to save Tucker and Hoshi and their reliance on the aliens to do so . He felt that the links to " Errand of Mercy " were both " subtle " and " sublime " , while describing the overall bottle show as " No slam @-@ bang excitement ; just a commitment to observation and plausible procedure . " He adds that the episode was an example of " humanist science fiction " rather than an " adventure show " .

Michelle Erica Green disliked the episode , writing about it in a review for TrekNation . She called it " clichéd , predictable and boring " , saying that the sudden differences in characterization in this episode , compared to how those characters acted in earlier appearances , could potentially lead to confusion as to when they were actually controlled by the aliens . She criticized the plot which only affected the senior crew members on the ship and said that it had " ripped off " several prior episodes of the franchise including " The Empath " , " Homeward " and " Scientific Method " .

" Observer Effect " was released on home media in the United States on November 1 , 2005 , as part of the season four DVD box set of Enterprise . The Blu @-@ ray edition was released on April 1 , 2014 .