

= The Daedalus Variations =

" The Daedalus Variations " is the 84th episode of the science fiction television series Stargate Atlantis , and is the fourth episode in the series ' fifth season . The episode first aired on August 1 , 2008 on the Sci Fi Channel in the United States , and subsequently aired on October 9 on Sky One in the United Kingdom . The episode was written by Alan McCullough , and directed by regular Stargate director , Andy Mikita . Richard Woolsey (Robert Picardo) and Jennifer Keller (Jewel Staite) do not appear in the episode , despite being credited during the opening title sequence . The episode bears similarities to the Flying Dutchman , a mythical ghost ship that drifts forever in the ocean with no chance of returning home . It received generally favourable reviews .

Episode writer McCullough described the episode as a one @-@ off " wild romp " , with much use of visual effects . The episode follows John Sheppard and his team , who investigates the mysterious appearance of the Daedalus over Atlantis , where they soon find the ship is from a parallel universe and makes its way through various alternate realities with an " alternate reality drive " . Stuck on the Daedalus , the team seeks to find a way to return , while they run into contact with a newly introduced alien race and find the ship 's new drive is slowly burning out , and they could be stranded in another universe forever .

= = Plot = =

A spaceship appears out of nowhere over Atlantis . John Sheppard (Joe Flanigan) and his team discover that the ship is the Daedalus , which is strange as Stargate Command confirms that the Daedalus is actually two days away from Earth . Sheppard 's team boards the new Daedalus and find it apparently abandoned with signs of battle damage . Teyla (Rachel Luttrell) views a log entry from the Daedalus commander , Colonel Sobel , who the team has never heard of before . Suddenly , there is a power spike and the Daedalus disappears from above Atlantis , while from the perspective of Sheppard 's team , Atlantis disappears . McKay finds that they have been propelled into a parallel universe by what he terms an " alternate reality drive " , and thus the Daedalus is actually from an alternate reality .

The team finds another version of themselves , dead , who come from yet another parallel universe and were trapped aboard while investigating the ship , just as they are . Soon , the ship jumps again , into a reality where Atlantis is under attack from an unfamiliar alien ship . Sheppard intervenes , and the aliens retaliate by launching fighters . One of the fighters crashes into the Daedalus before it jumps again , this time into a universe where Atlantis ' sun has already swelled into a red giant . To keep the ship from being burned up , McKay (David Hewlett) increases the rate at which the alternate reality drive activates , warning that his modifications are irreversible . Meanwhile , the team must contend with aliens from the crashed fighter . McKay figures out that there is no way to guide the alternate reality drive , but that they can return to their original reality by reversing the drive and jumping back through the realities they had visited before . They use the maneuvering thrusters to stabilize the ship 's orbit above the red giant , and weather another attack by the aliens , with help from an alternate Atlantis . Once they return to their own reality , they leave the ship in space suits after a remaining alien detonates an explosive , causing a breach in the ship 's hull and are picked up by Lorne (Kavan Smith) after the Daedalus disappears . In the end , McKay is shown working on fixing the alternate reality drive , despite Sheppard 's admonishments .

= = Production = =

The original concept of an episode involving alternate realities was a room in Atlantis that shifts into alternate realities . However , the idea had several issues , including the possibility of no Atlantis in one reality , so Robert C. Cooper suggested using the Daedalus . The final draft of " The Daedalus Variations " was completed on February 11 . On February 12 , the prosthetics meeting for the episode , as well as " The Seed " , " Broken Ties " and " Whispers " took place , which most likely involved the unknown aliens featured from the episode . The appearance of the aliens was revealed

in the advertisement for the episode on July 27 . In an interview with episode writer , Alan McCullough , he described the episode as a " great team show " , and a " visual effects spectacular . " On March 10 , Captain Sobol was cast . Sobol was the alternate commander of the Daedalus , rather than Colonel Caldwell (Mitch Pileggi) . By the time the episode aired , Sobol was female (portrayed by Tracy Waterhouse) , she held the rank of Colonel instead , and her name was spelled " Sobel " .

Much of the episode was filmed on the Daedalus set . Due to that , visual effects were required to fill in the external shots . The episode was reportedly one of the most expensive VFX budgets in the series , and is the most expensive for the season . The star map behind the captain 's chair of the Daedalus is usually lit green . However , the episode 's writer and supervising producer , Alan McCullough , deliberately turned the map 90 degrees and changed the color from green to orange , so as to make the ship different from the normal Daedalus . McCullough also stated that the episode is a one @-@ off , but did not rule out a return beyond the fifth season . He also said that he originally planned the team to visit a reality where the Ancients won the war against the Wraith , but this idea was dropped as it would detract from the main storyline . The episode was Jason Momoa 's first appearance with his customised wig . After he had his hair cut by the time the fourth season was completed , for the first three episodes he had it sewn back on . However , when SCI FI wouldn't allow his hairstyle to be changed , they switched to the wig after Momoa complained about the pain of having his hair sewn on again .

= = Reception = =

" The Daedalus Variations " was given a household rating of 1 @. @ 3 , making Stargate Atlantis the fourth most viewed series for the week on Sci Fi Channel . They were beaten by ECW on Sci Fi (with 1 @. @ 4) , Ghost Hunters International (with 1 @. @ 6) and the season three premiere of Eureka (which earned the highest rating of 2 @. @ 1) . The episode was also received generally positive . Tory Ireland Mell of IGN praised the episode for its reasonably short teaser , thinking the shorter it is , the better the episode , as well as its gripping storyline and the introduction of the alien race , particularly the fact that very little is known about them , stating it was " a perfect tease by the writers . " The episode was rated 9 @. @ 1 out of 10 overall . Marx Pyle of the SyFy Portal (which was since renamed Airlock Alpha) compared the episode as Atlantis ' version of Star Trek : The Next Generation episode " Q Who ? " in respect to the introduction of a new " big bad " for the future . It was praised for being a " fun filler " episode , and Pyle enjoyed the scene where the two Sheppards converse , and the space battle , believing only Battlestar Galactica could beat them . However , Pyle criticised the episode for the absence of Woolsey , and McKay 's apparent quick understanding of new technologies including the alternate reality drive , as well as feeling that Sci Fi gave away too much information from the previews of the episode .