



Star Control Online

Star Control Online MMO **Executive Summary** Developed by Jason Wages

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***Star Control Online* MMO Executive Summary**

Star Control Online (SCO) is a new massively multiplayer online adventure based on the hit 1992 PC classic *Star Control II (SC2)*. Utilizing a combination of traditional and innovative levelling techniques, an involved and immersive atmosphere as well as being set in a futuristic science-fiction setting will make this MMO like no other. By combining modern technology with a classic and tested concept, *Star Control Online* will draw both new gamers, experienced online gamers looking for a fresh direction, and long-time gamers who remember the fun they experienced with the original *Star Control* series. The game will combine a richly diverse universe of adventure, dozens of alien races, both personal and ship levelling, real-time space combat, and an epic storyline to immerse players in.

Game Overview

Star Control Online takes place in the year 2154, 20 years after the defeat of humanity and their allies to the forces of the dreaded Ur-Quan slave empire and their minions. Freeing themselves from the yoke of oppression and reuniting their original forces, the Alliance of Free Stars pits itself against the Hierarchy of Battle Thralls to either free themselves from tyranny or find themselves and their worlds once again locked under the red glow of planetary slave shields. And all the while, both forces must brave the many dangers of space, including a host of external and terrifying alien presences determined to sweep away all that stands before them. Players will be able to choose which faction to join and grow both their characters and their ships in strength and power over the course of their adventure, battling both the perils of the Milky Way galaxy and each other on the road to glory and freedom.

Initially the players would have access to one of two factions: the Alliance of Free Stars and the Hierarchy of Battle Thralls. On the former side, they would have access to racial choices of the classic Human, the small-but-fiery raccoon-like Shofixti, the alluring Syreen, the brilliant and crystalline Chenjesu, the mechanical Mmrmhrm, and the proud bird-like Yehat; on the latter, there would be the evil spider-like Illwrath, the brutish stone-bodied Thraddash, the cowardly meta-mollusk Spathi, the horrible and narcissistic VUX, the blobbish-yet-humorous Umgah, and the cruel and slave-trading Druuge. Within each of these races would be numerous classes, careers and directions they could move based on what skills they focus on and what attributes they choose to develop over time. By choosing certain crews and allocating their resources, players could choose any kind of ship to call their own, ranking it as its own character and customizing it with abilities, combat powers, trading capabilities and aesthetic details. Alliances and Unions can form between groups of players, allowing development of starbases and planetside strongholds, group combat tactics, additional questing content, pooled resources and a host of other benefits (as well as the challenge of doing PvP battle with similar enemy unions and their own pool of resources and power).

The Keys to Success

An innovative approach to MMO levelling

SCO will present players with two types of levelling systems to try their hand at: the use of a stat-and-skill-based improvement system similar to *Ultima Online*'s for their avatar player character, and a classic MMO ranking/levelling process for their starship. A player can thus have two

unique characters to progress through the game: they can focus mostly on their avatar character for planetary missions, diplomacy and tradeskill building, their ship for combat and space missions, or can compliment one with the other to obtain full power and access to all the game's possibilities.

A galactic storyline

One of the reasons Star Control II has been considered by many to be one of the best games of all time was its epic and immersive storyline and wonderful cadre of colorful alien species. Starting from the humblest of beginnings on a rickety and underpowered ship, gathering resources and allies and strength, the players would eventually watch as a cosmic-scale adventure unfolded seamlessly before them. SCO offers the same possibility to players but on a visually grander scale, a modern take on a classic that still remembers its roots and what made SC2 such a thrill and challenge, mixed with mystery and intrigue. The original SC2 storyline is opened up with 21st century technology and the ability to take part of it with friends and against real enemies.

Real-time stellar combat

Both the original Star Control and Star Control II provided exceptionally fun real-time space combat, pitting vessels of different strengths and weaknesses against each other in both PvP and PvE. It wasn't just a fly-by-and-straft or one-on-one battle, there was strategy stemming from both the power and speed of the vessels as well as the traits of their unique weaponry and special secondary powers. Players had to make real use of manoeuvrability and immediate combat decisions and choices. SCO will allow players to utilize real-time, environment-based space combat using all these options as well as many others including advances like radar systems, engineering crews, boarding parties and (utilizing the MMO aspect of the game) group tactics and armada abilities. Ships can be specialized and tailored to best compliment the player's preferred fighting style, gaining strength and options as they level throughout the game.

Space, the final frontier

Star Control wasn't just an adventure on a planetary scale – an entire quadrant of the Milky Way galaxy was at the player's fingertips. An endless assortment of star systems, space stations and alternate dimensions were available to explore and adventure in. SCO offers that and more, fully utilizing a vibrant 3D environment, bringing the fight from terra firma into the vastness of space. Black holes, nebulas, asteroid fields, battle platforms and bases, extra-dimensional proving grounds and massive stellar lifeforms await players as they step beyond the confines of our solar system and branch out into neighbouring constellations.

Pointy ears for Spock, not Legolas

While fantasy-based MMOs have come and gone and many such as EverQuest and World of Warcraft have proven this to be a rich and lucrative setting, there are far more magic-based massively-multiplayer products on the market than science fiction. This environment has barely even begun to tap its potential, with Eve Online and Star Wars Galaxies being the only two real forays into this realm. Not only does SCO provide another venue into sci-fi MMOs, it does so while tapping into the deep well of design and innovation that the original Star Control series offered, and can do so using the multiple levels of approach that we at EA Mythic have established experience with.

Successful and tested game base

Star Control II has been considered one of the best games of all time by a number of reviewers. It ranks as #17 on IGN's list of Top 100 Games and is considered one of the greatest games of all time by Gamespot.com. The original source of SC2 is freely available on the web by its original developers under the name "The Ur-Quan Masters" and even after 17 years it continues to be downloaded by avid game players everywhere. Working from this and always keeping an eye on what made this game fun and memorable will help us on the road to success with this next-generation MMO project.

A license looking for a home

Star Control 2 was developed originally by the company Toys for Bob with the game published through Accolade. The game was also released on a variety of console platforms by Electronic Arts – our company's past affiliation with this title and the original designers' hopes of breathing new life into the product make acquiring Star Control for this project a stronger prospect. There have also been a variety of petitions online by numerous fans wanting to resurrect this game franchise, and if addressed seriously and positively such a situation presents us with an already-established and motivated fan-base.

An array of already-existing art and story assets to draw from

Star Control Online would have the advantage of having a solidly-developed collection of characters, races, stories, ship designs, resource-gathering techniques, and environments to gather from. The original incarnation of the game was littered with an assortment of nearly 40 alien civilizations, each with unique and amazing spacefaring vessels at their hands; dozens of homeworlds and literally hundreds if not thousands of planets to land on and explore across the seas of TrueSpace, HyperSpace and QuasiSpace; a vast array of artifacts, customizable starship modules, and resources to mine, cultivate and collect; and dynamic personalities within each of the races and fully-developed artwork on each of them and the environments they inhabit. All of this content though is but a framework that we could build from and expand into even greater horizons with our advanced technological and design capabilities over what the original 1992 game had available.

Long term life

Star Control 2 offered an astonishing amount of content, so much so that to try and incorporate every bit of it in a singularly-released shot would be nearly impossible. This makes available to Star Control Online a virtually unlimited well to draw from for quests, live events, content expansions, player development and customization, and even items for potential micro-transactions. Releasing these over time and helping progress the already larger-than-life storyline would help keep our customers hungry for more and extend the life of this MMO title well into the future.

Schedule, Development and Resources

Star Control Online would most likely require around 3-4 years of development time from start to release to make best use of the multitude of content options available for reference and framework. We would want to develop a client that could integrate the different kinds of character progression listed above while allowing freedom of movement through both the vastness of space and a variety of more terrain-based environments for players to explore when

not in their ships. However, EA Mythic's team of experienced developers, the existing technologies available to us from our past projects, and our singular knowledge of different MMO design and progression techniques that no one else has would reduce the learning curve of this project, as well as expedite the development process significantly.

If development can begin as early as the summer of 2009, then the game would be slated for release around Christmastime of 2012.

Additional content ideas, art references and design development of the *Star Control Online* MMO project can be made available through its designer Jason Wages (jwages@ea.com).

Online references and resources:

Wikipedia – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_control_2

The Ur-Quan Masters homepage – <http://sc2.sourceforge.net/>

The Ultranomicon – http://wiki.uqm.stack.nl/Main_Page

Toys for Bob (the original developers) – <http://www.toysforbob.com/>

The Pages of Now & Forever (fan center) – <http://starcontrol.classicgaming.gamespy.com/>

Races:

http://wiki.uqm.stack.nl/List_of_Races

Characters of note through the series:

http://wiki.uqm.stack.nl/List_of_Characters

Ships:

http://wiki.uqm.stack.nl/List_of_Ships

Art References

Original SC2 artwork –

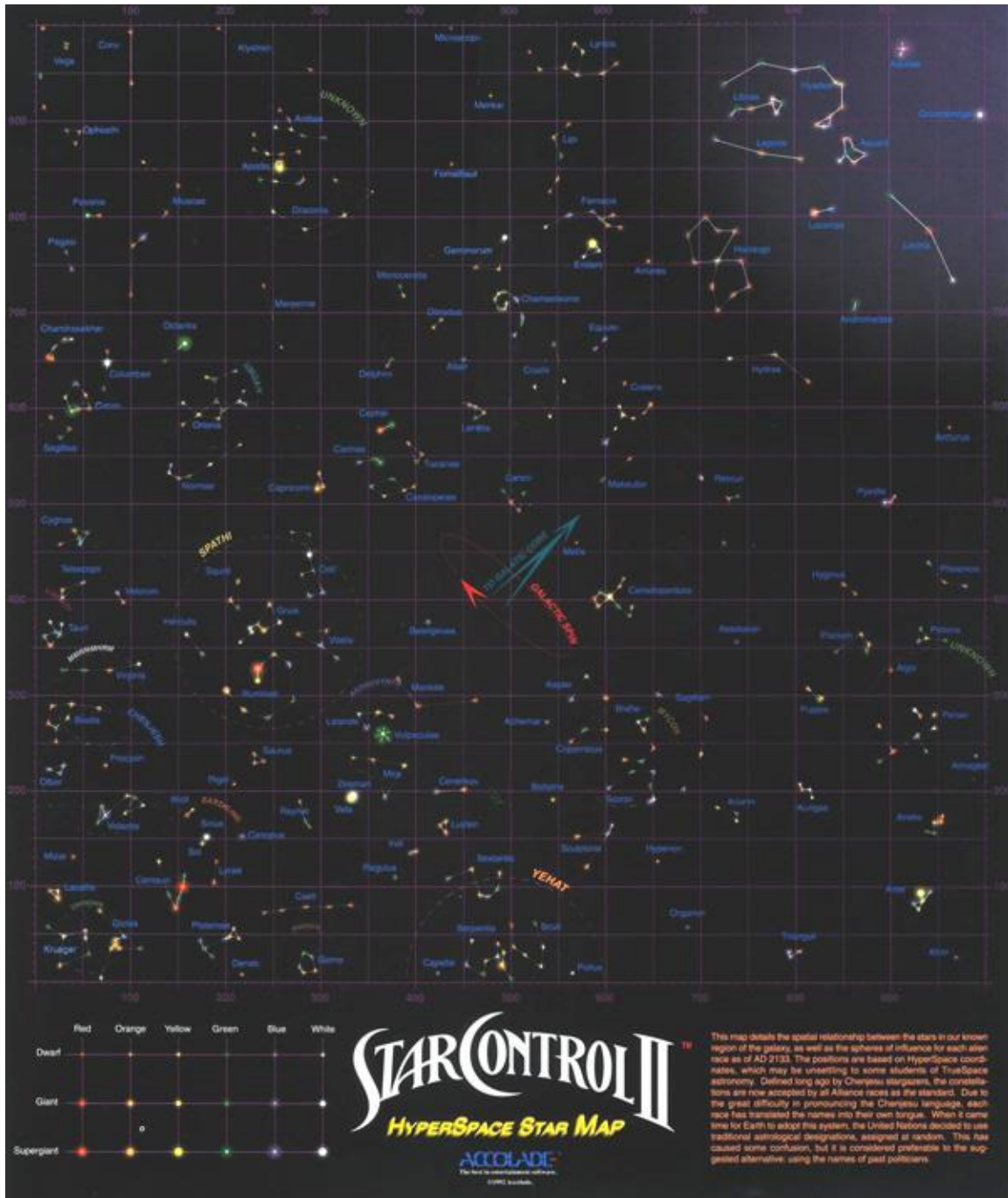
SC2 race examples:



SC2 ship examples:

Ship	Race	Short description
 Avenger	Ilwrath	Large. Devastating flame blast. Cloaking device.
 Broodhome	Chenjesu	Big. Crystal fragment weapon. Breeds pesky doggies.
 Cruiser	Earthling	Slow, heavy. Seeking nukes. Point defense lasers.
 Dreadnought	Ur-Quan Kzer-Za	Huge, slow. Heavy weapon. Launches fighters.
 Drone	Umgah	Stubby and slow. Anti-matter cone. Zips backwards.
 Eluder	Spathi	Very fast. Large, cowardly crew. Rear firing weapon.
 Fury	Pkunk	Extremely fast, maneuverable. May resurrect. Insults enemy.
 Guardian	Androsynth	Pokey. Blows mean bubbles. Changes to flaming comet.
 Intruder	VUX	Clumsy. Powerful laser. Spawns limpet parasites.
 Jugger	Utwig	Big, maneuverable. Absorbent shields. Main cannons need no energy.
 Marauder	Ur-Quan Kohr-Ah	Has long-range spinning metal blades, ring of fire. Scary.
 Mauler	Druuge	Weak engine. Powerful, large momentum weapon. Combustible crew.
 Nemesis	Orz	Rotating turret. Space marines board enemy ships and kill crew.
 Penetrator	Syreen	Lithe space vixens who steal enemy's crew.
 Podship	Mycon	Very slow. Homing plasma torpedo. Grows new crew.
 Probe	Slylandro	Reverses direction instantly. Absorbs asteroids. Comes in peace.

SC2 Starmap – this is a reduced version of the original map of space players could navigate through in the original game. Note that players could visit and explore every one of these star systems.



(original at http://farm1.static.flickr.com/23/27873431_7c7d8788ea_b.jpg)

Eve Online – examples of space travel and visual style



