

VS Traveller – Space Sim

VS Traveller

VS Traveller or vsTraveller is a self-proposed non-commercial Mod for Vega Strike or possibly Privateer:WCU based on the same Engine. While Vega Strike above has the most complete feature settings including the possibility for subcraft, it has a few drawbacks. Development is slow (with about a Million „o“) and there are bugs that bug me.

On a perfectly vanilla Windows Vista PC 4GB RAM, low spec on-board graphics, USB-Gamepad, USB-Keyboard and USB-Mouse, a Headset and VoiceAttack Software running in the back, the game becomes unplayable when approaching the first planet (Atlantis) due to polycount I guess.

Turning down the graphics setting to quite low, results in a playable state, but the bugging starts when approaching the Planet (press N to select Planet as Target), approach planet, press ALT+0 (Alt+Zero) to request docking clearance, wait until Docking clear appears in the HUD and Press D to dock. Nothing happens when pressing D. VoiceAttack results in the same. The SW recognises the command (Open menu) for example is set to press ESC and it works from ingame. But well... I used to spend so much time modding VS that I hope it can be sorted out one of these days.

Whats an absolute plus for VS is it's multiplayer capabilities.

Meanwhile... we also take a closer look at other engines...

Alternative Game Engines

Under the working name Traveller Pioneer the game could also be a non-commercial Mod for Pioneer Space Sim It is an

alternative to VS Traveller above with the exact identical gameplay in mind. We are going to test both engines on an older surplus Office PC with lower VGA-Specs to evaluate performance differences of the engine.

Pioneer seems to have a very active Community, it's also customizable, features an Open Source Game Engine and is a sandbox single player game. It offers top notch graphic add-ons and loads of scripts that expand gameplay. Furthermore it has working planet to space transition and on planet locations implemented.

It does not have Subcraft if I recall correctly, but I could live with that for a while. Pioneer is based on pure Newtonian Physics. While very challenging and fun you are required to actually learn flying the ships, especially landing them. Believe me, going from a Multi-Mach re-entry speed to zero (drift, yaw, pitch, roll wise), on a tiny landing pad is not easy. On the other hand you can dive deep down onto planets. Great fun.

Next could be Oolite, an open world space opera. Multi platform, highly customizable, low impact on hardware resources. However it generates its universe only procedurally. That wouldn't work with vsTraveller.

The goal is to use Models created for Traveller Illustrated and a Traveller Starmap / Game Universe. This will include probably only the Foreven Sector, ideally one of the more explored sectors like the Spinward Marches or the Reavers Deep Sector. That also depends on what Mark Miller's position to this would be (I haven't asked yet because I'm only in the planning stages).

I'm afraid this will remain a closed project for licensing reasons. I will have to inquire and get permission first to deploy such a data set using all the copyrighted material from the game. And to be honest at this time VS Traveller is just a

name and a thought experiment. I will show ingame screenshots and footage if that becomes feasible. But do not expect to see anything happen very soon on this page.

vsTraveller Resources

The planned Storyline follows the events of the 5th Frontier War. At least that's what I'd like to experience once again, because I came to Traveller when it was already over and my fellow gamers recited wartime stories from the 5th Frontier War. But there are questions...

- Is it possible to advance (offset) game time by one week per jump?
- Can we use travellermap.com as a mapping resource in game?
- How to sync player with in game event time line?
- How to sync players of different installations (light interactivity via web forum)?
- How to distribute game assets between installations/players?
- How to implement RPG elements (crew as ship component / upgrade, chars as special cargo)? That's actually a good idea ☺

In the meantime I discovered that my beloved Privateer Parallel Universe (PPU) has disappeared from the Internet. It was so cleanly developed and features were so established that I planned to use it as a base for my other mod „Nations of Orion“. But thanks to one loney dev the sources were saved and brought up to the most recent Vega Strike dev state. The new name is Privateer WCU and basically everything I wanted for my games. Thanks ermo for your work on it.

So I set up a debian based – Linux Mint Debian Edition (LMDE) to be exact – development system just for it. After sorting out a few dependencies VS compiled fine and I plan to make the required changes to run Priv:WCU shortly. Already I

changed the VS Splash screen of my Windows machine to a few Traveller images I converted for this purpose. A nice touch, but nothing to show off yet.

So I will let you know which way I will be heading. A current Privateer Wing Commander Universe (WCU) as a dev base would be nice.

Implementing RPG elements into VS

Working with the units.csv file of Vega Strike

First the technical limitations need to be addressed. VS is a single player first person space sim by trade. It learned multiplayer on it's way, even mmo. But the roots are basically single player trade and fight. vsTraveller will be a first person space sim too. It will probably stay a single player game, as Traveller jumps take too long for in game coverage. Thus each jump advances the clock by about 168 hours (+/- what the rules say). No real time mmo is possible this way, but a community would still be. Players could pass contacts and missions and exchange news, messages, goods and equipment through starport services. Every time a ship arrives in system any updates relevant for that ship and timeframe will be downloaded and made available. It's virtual play by mail inside a pc game. Group play might be possible in supporting roles with temporary assets. One player sets the mission and other can join representing ships in system at that time. Not their own ships, but such that would have normally been controlled by the AI.

RPG implementation will probably be a simple Classic Traveller Character Profile plus description, comparable to the regenerated characters shipped with classic Adventure Modules or Double Adventures. Example scanned from the Classic Traveller Module Beltstrike as per Fair Use Policy:

<p>Name: Eneri Shulamikar UPP: 7699A6</p> <p>Service: ex-Merchant 5 terms 297-1109 Rank: Captain</p> <p>Birthdate: 045-1071 Birthworld: Mora/Mora 0704 AA99AC7-F</p> <p>Skills: Pilot-3, Bribery-2, Mechanical-1, Navigation-1, Gunnery-2.</p> <p>Possessions: Free Trader Money: Cr50,000</p> <p>Comments: Merchant experience with Oberlindes Lines in Regina and Aramis subsectors. Served as Navigator/First Officer aboard 60,000-ton converted fleet intruder <i>Emissary</i> (ex-<i>Sparkling Distress</i>) in Vargr space.</p>	<p>Name: Zilla Pegunang UPP: 5B3842</p> <p>Service: ex-Other 5 terms 248-1109 Rank: Captain</p> <p>Birthdate: 125-1071 Birthworld: Tarsus/District 288 0308 B584620-A</p> <p>Skills: Steetwise-2, Bribery-1, Forgery-1, Gambling-2.</p> <p>Possessions: Body Pistol Money: Cr110,000</p> <p>Comments: A swindler and a gambler, Pegunang has wandered in and out of the Imperium for most of her life, and has turned her hand to everything from reasonably honest trade and speculation to smuggling, con games, and forgery.</p>	<p>Name: Dr. Arpad Nushur UPP: 796675</p> <p>Service: ex-Navy 3 terms 024-1110 Rank: Lieutenant Commander</p> <p>Birthdate: 163-1080 Birthworld: Jewell/Jewell 0306 A777999-C</p> <p>Skills: Medic-3, Admin-1, Ship's Boat-1, SMG-1, Computer-1.</p> <p>Possessions: SMG Money: Cr70,000</p> <p>Comments: Senior Medical Officer of colonial cruiser BC-9525 <i>Agidda</i>. Served in the Querion and Vilis subsectors, and at the Battle of Thanber.</p>
<p>Name: Tsutomu Woronow UPP: A786B5</p> <p>Service: ex-Navy 4 terms 106-1109 Rank: Lieutenant</p> <p>Birthdate: 322-1075 Birthworld: New Rome/Gilsten 0308 B837866-B</p> <p>Skills: Engineering-2, Electronic-2, Jack of all Trades-1, Mechanical-2.</p> <p>Possessions: Money: Cr16,000 one Low Passage</p> <p>Comments: Served as engineer aboard colonial cruiser BC-9525 <i>Agidda</i> at the Battle of Thanber.</p>	<p>Name: Joan Eshunnak UPP: 793674</p> <p>Service: ex-Scout 4 terms 196-1108 Rank: Captain</p> <p>Birthdate: 289-1074 Birthworld: Porozlo/Rhylanor 0305 A867A74-A</p> <p>Skills: Gunnery-3, Pilot-1, Rifle-2, Engineering-1, Medical-1</p> <p>Possessions: Vacc Suit-1 Money: Cr100,000</p> <p>Comments: Service with Scout Squadron 53. Captured at Battle of Thanber; exchanged. Later served at Lanth and Rhylanor as boat gunner attached to Marine landing force.</p>	<p>Name: Johann "Lucky Yo" Jorgensson UPP: 7866A4</p> <p>Service: Beltar 5 terms</p> <p>Birthdate: 111-1072 Birthworld: Bowman/District 268 0302 D000300-9</p> <p>Skills: Vacc Suit-2, Prospecting-2, Zero-G Environ-1, Gambling-1, Ship's Boat-1, Mech-1, JOT-1, Computer-1, Fwd Obsvr-1, one Middle Passage</p> <p>Possessions: Money: Cr1,000</p> <p>Comments: See the short adventure <i>Beltstrike!</i> for background on Jorgensson.</p>
<p>Name: Zhuandao Weiss UPP: 97A683</p> <p>Service: ex-Merchant 2 terms 362-1109 Rank: Fourth Officer</p> <p>Birthdate: 180-1083 Birthworld: Junidy/Aramis 0802 B434ABD-9</p> <p>Skills: Steward-2, Gunnery-2, Rifle-1.</p> <p>Possessions: Rifle Money: Cr20,000</p> <p>Comments: Shipped with independent free traders through most of his career. During the war years, operated in the Glisten and Fax Rulin subsectors.</p>	<p>Name: Enli Eriskany UPP: C7A483</p> <p>Service: ex-Marine 3 terms 014-1110 Rank: Captain</p> <p>Birthdate: 312-1080 Birthworld: Chamols/Trin's Veil 0709 B544642-5</p> <p>Skills: Cutlass-3, Revolver-1, Vacc Suit-1, Brawling-2, SMG-1.</p> <p>Possessions: Cutlass Money: Cr22,000</p> <p>Comments: Member Travellers' Aid Society</p> <p>Comments: Served with 1931st Marine Regiment at Lanth and Rhylanor. Awarded Medal for Conspicuous Gallantry for rescuing a squad trapped in a downed assault shuttle during campaign around Lanth.</p>	<p>Name: Lee Huseyin UPP: A86859</p> <p>Service: ex-Marine 5 terms 206-1109 Rank: Force Commander</p> <p>Birthdate: 302-1071 Birthworld: Lunion/Lunion 0504 A996984-D</p> <p>Skills: Cutlass-1, Revolver-2, Tactics-2, Vacc Suit-1, Rifle-2, Grav Vehicle-1, Brawling-1, Electronics-1.</p> <p>Possessions: Cutlass Money: Cr27,000</p> <p>Comments: Member Travellers' Aid Society</p> <p>Comments: Imperial Marine annual pension of Cr4,000. Served with the 9327th Imperial Marine Regiment at Thanber and Garde-Vilis.</p>

As visible in that scan Characters are composed of a name, UPP, career info, birthdate, homeworld, main skills, main possessions, cash and a short description. Thats possibly as far as it gets. Maybe we use MegaTraveller character generation rules as per this web-script. Or maybe we use T5 Quick Character generation as proposed by Robert Eaglestone:

Quick Character Generation

1. [optional] Determine homeworld and starting skill(s).
2. Roll the UPP.
3. Pick a career and the number of terms.
4. Select [age - 10] skills from that career.
5. Apply aging effects.
6. [optional] Muster out.

Crew

The crew are virtual characters not directly controlled but influenced by the player, they form a modifying skill set that can influence ship capabilities, at times where the character or autopilot is in control of the ship. The crew is available as a special type of unique ship upgrade. Pilot and Engineer Crew upgrades boost performance, Navigator and Sensor Crew upgrades affect traveltime, efficiency and combat visibility,

Medical, Steward and Broker Crew Upgrades affect economic factors, etc.

Crew can be generic (random names) and unique (reoccurring npc names) and can change ship by selling and being bought. Maybe there will be a chance to change „buy and sell“ into something like „hire and fire“ in this context.

Crew Assets (example)

Name	Function	Stat influenced	Modifier	Cost	Duration
Joe Generic	Pilot	Speed	+30%	3000,- Cr	30 days
Jane Doe	Navigator	Range	+20%	2500,- Cr	30 days
John Doe	Tech	Repair Cost	-30%	2800,- CR	30 days
Count Numbers	Medic	Passenger availability	+15%	3000,- CR	30 days
Dave Dark	Engineer	Agility	+30%	2700,- Cr	30 days

Adding Upgrades to Vega Strike

Characters

A character is one major person controlled by a player as his in game representation. It is basically a oackage of information carried aboard the ship. It will be represented by a special type of unique cargo. Character can change ships through trade or missions.

Character Assets (example)

Name: Tsutomu Woronow	UPP: A786B5
Service: ex-Navy, 4 terms, 106-1109	Rank: Lieutenant
Birthdate: 322-1075	Birthworld New Rome/Glisten 0308 B837866-B
Skills	Engineering-2, Electronic-2, JoT-1, Mechanical-1
Possessions: none	Money: 16,000 Cr [one Low Passage]
Comments	
Served as Engineer aboard colonial cruiser BC-9525 Agidda at the Battle of Thanber.	

Adding Cargo to Vega Strike

3D Cockpits

cockpit_blend

Convert (Classic) Traveller Characters to vsTraveller

Well I'll keep you updated for the latest in development.

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