Star Citizen’s Squadron 42 campaign is “feature complete” after 11 years



Enlarge / Gillian Anderson’s likeness has been promoting *Star Citizen* since 2015.
Cloud Imperium Games

reader comments

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Eleven years ago, *Wing Commander* designer Chris Roberts announced *Star Citizen,* an online multiplayer game that he said would “change the way people perceive games for the PC.” Roberts told Ars’ Kyle Orland soon after that he didn’t enjoy the four-year development of another hit, *Freelancer*, because “spending that many years disconnected from your audience, sort of working off by yourself, wasn’t creatively fun for me.” With *Star Citizen*, Roberts said he could keep development from dragging on by engaging fans and using a pre-built engine, as opposed to what Roberts said would be “two years” building his own.

Roberts has definitely engaged his audience in *Star Citizen*,

to the tune of $616 million raised from more than 4.8 million "Star Citizens." It has just taken a bit longer than two years to give them a true release.

Roughly 11 years after *Star Citizen*'s initial announcement that included it, then nine years after its first potential release date, *Squadron 42,* the single-player campaign, is now "feature complete" and has "entered its polish phase." Roberts announced this in a video released Sunday as part of an annual CitizenCon for backers, along with footage from the game and details on its development.

[embedded content]
Star Citizen's *Squadron 42* campaign is "feature-complete," as announced by its developer on Sunday.
Richard Tyrer, senior game director on *Squadron 42*, says in the video that the team is putting "extra emphasis on ensuring things feel fun." That includes the immersive feel of the cockpit and ship flight and ship AI. The development team has been divided into "self-sufficient strike teams," focused on individual areas. There's a lot more proof of work in the 26-minute video, including lots of cinematic footage of the Hollywood-tier cast for the game: Mark Hamill, Gillian Anderson, Andy Serkis, Gary Oldman, and more.

The thing fans and crowdsource backers of the game are likely most eager to see, a release date or even just a release window, is yet to come. "When we have the locked release date, you will be first to know," Roberts says. "The polish phase can take some time."

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Running down the history of *Star Citizen*'s development is a kind of single-player campaign in itself. After raising nearly $50 million in crowdfunding, a kind of training/simulation version of the game's dogfighting and other aspects, *Arena Commander*, was released in a public build in 2014. Ars' Lee Hutchinson paid a visit to the Austin, Texas-based studios for

Roberts Space Industries, which was working on the MMO-style "persistent" game, the one that is properly titled *Star Citizen*. *Squadron 42* is its own game, intended to be played first, with both the player and their character then prepared for the persistent *Star Citizen* universe.

- Ships! Doing things! In *Squadron 42*.
- One of many player character appearances in *Squadron 42*.
- I was hoping the teaser trailer would have more star-dates in it, so I could make some obvious jokes about Easter egg release dates.

The developers, in Hutchinson's opinion, were eager to let players in on early-access builds and work out their issues with fans' input included. Lead designer Rob Irving told Hutchinson that "openness has had its trade-offs… It's great to be so close to the fans but hard to face them down without all of the answers."

Backers of *Star Citizen* continued to seek answers over nearly a decade of continued development. Roberts would push back on the idea that his project had succumbed to "feature creep" by 2015, stating that "*Star Citizen* matters BECAUSE it is big, because it is a bold dream" (emphasis his). After reaching 1 million backers in late 2015, the full game was unlocked for all backers.

A production schedule was made public in late 2016, one year after *Squadron 42* was originally slated to launch. At that time, *Star Citizen* was slated for an August 2016 release. That date slipped by, and then the studio became embroiled in a lawsuit against their original (theoretically time-saving) engine, Crytek's CryEngine. Because *Squadron 42* had not been released, and was then pushed to 2020. Crytek sought to dismiss the suit, and the *Star Citizen* developer settled for a relatively meager sum in 2018.

Another roadmap was issued in mid-2020—a roadmap to a new

roadmap. By early 2022, the developers had said that they would no longer issue target dates for any new features that were more than one calendar quarter away to avoid “distraction” and “continued noise every time we shift deliverables” from “a very loud contingent of Roadmap watchers.” At that time (January 2022), COO of Cloud Imperium Games Carl Jones said that *Squadron 42* needed “one or two years more.”

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