

A Call to Arms: Star Fleet review – by Craig Pearson

I'd never been part of the original Star Trek miniature game, so this rule set was my first experience of the universe in gaming terms. I bought myself the Klingon fleet and the pocket rulebook, which is similar to those produced by Games Workshop, with less pictures, scenarios, fluff and condensed rules. The pocket version also has fewer featured fleets, with stats for only the Federation, Klingons and Romulans. That being said, it contains everything needed to play the game.

The rules themselves are very simple to play. Each turn is divided into four phases; the initiative, movement, shooting and end phases. Once initiative has been determined, players begin the movement phase by selecting a ship in turn and moving it, starting with the player who lost initiative. Once all ships have been moved the turn switches to the shooting phase. Like movement, players take turns (starting with the player who won initiative) to select and fire with a ship until all ships have done so. During shooting players have the option of firing with all eligible weapons or holding some back for defensive fire, which allow them to counter certain types of attacks. The final phase is the end phase, in which players roll to repair any critical damage they received in the shooting phase or in previous turns. During the turn players have the option of placing their ships on special orders. These have a range of effects from boosting weapons or shields, to increasing the efficiency of repair crew. Either way, they add variety to the game and what Trekkie wouldn't enjoy saying "Take evasive action!"

The three original fleets (Federation, Klingon and Romulan) all play very differently and can take time to master. Federation ships are individually expensive, but have very good shields and phasers ratings in all quadrants...not to mention their lethal photon torpedoes! They perform best one-on-one and particularly in scenarios where transporters and science labs come into play. The Klingons on the other hand have very powerful shields to the fore and practically nothing elsewhere, but make up for this by being possibly the most agile fleet in the game. Their phasers aren't overly powerful, but their disruptors more than make up for this, which (unlike photons) can fire every turn and are nearly as powerful. The final fleet in the pocket rules are the Romulans. As in the fluff, all of their ships have cloaking devices, which although still targetable, lets them to get into close range or capture objectives in relative safety. This is important as they probably have the most fragile ships in the game. Like the Klingons, they rely less on their phasers and more on their special weapons...plasma torpedoes. If used correctly these weapons can be devastating, with cruisers being perfectly capable of stripping the shields and even inflicting damage on targets as large as battleships.

Overall, I would give this game 8/10. The rules are simple to pick up but will take time to master, which should appeal to most gamers. The main downfall of this rule set is the amount of updates to ships stats and costs that have followed. Although they can be found on the Mongoose Games website, a new edition of the rules would have been better. The ship models are also very nice, but because the game is based on the Original Series, will be quite limited for some people. This is especially true for the Klingons, who have the same looking ship only in different sizes, and iconic ships like the Bird of Prey are non-existent.