

Text-Only 2017 Top 10 Axanar Stories

No. 10

Star Trek: Discovery

Delayed from January to May and finally premiering in September, the new Star Trek series garnered big numbers for CBS' new online network, All Access. Like all the sequels following the Original Series, reactionary fans - including many Axanar supporters - declared it a betrayal of Gene Roddenberry's vision. Their protests that DSC would be a copy of Axanar were proved wrong by the new series' bold storyline. Meanwhile, many Axanar fans sought solace from Fox's TNG-era homage, The Orville.

No. 9

Axanar Forced to Move

After sinking nearly three quarters of a million dollars from donors into a studio in which not a single frame of Axanar was ever shot, Alec Peters returned to the crowdfunding well seeking \$200,000 to put Industry Studios on sound financial footing. Of Axanar's vaunted 15,000 fans barely more than 300 put up \$22,020 that instead paid for Peters to abandon his California soundstage for a Georgia warehouse in which, he assured donors, Axanar would finally be made.

No. 8

The New Narrative

In the face of Axanar's utter failure, Alec Peters sought to paint his production as the victim of film studios frightened by how good his film was going to be. In this new narrative, the loss of Industry Studios, for example, was the fault of a crippling copyright lawsuit that drained its coffers. In reality, the decision to spend almost \$750,000 on a three-year lease for a never-completed, never-used studio he would've only needed for a matter of weeks was solely Peters' call. Each month saw \$15,000 going out the door with Axanar no closer to production. He gamely tried to salvage the studio in an ultimately unsuccessful Indiegogo campaign.

No. 7

Waning Support

Though settling his copyright lawsuit with CBS/Paramount won Alec Peters the right to produce a 30-minute fan film - nicknamed Axanar Lite - it lost him fans who wanted a feature film. As 2017 wore on, Peters' vitriolic social media rants became self-inflicted wounds as former allies distanced themselves or broke ties completely, including the Trekyards podcasters and the Axanar podcast's home, Trek.fm. Hundreds fled Axanar's Facebook group after one egregious rant. Once welcome at Dragon*Con, Axanar's fan group was ejected after trying to sell merchandise using actor Tony Todd's image.

Sidebar

'I wish my hands were clean of this awful train wreck'

In 2017, a growing number of former Axanar supporters publicly disavowed Alec Peters and his project. Duane Browning summed up their feelings in a year-end blog post: "By supporting Axanar, I had contributed to the outright demise of Star Trek: Phase 2 and the early conclusion of Star Trek Continues. ... I wish that I could take back my \$65 and delete every post I made that supported Axanar and feel like my hands were clean of this awful trainwreck."

No. 6

Axanar's Finances

Alec Peters needed damage control after court documents pointed toward his lavish spending of tens of thousands of donor dollars on personal expenses such as restaurant meals, travel, car repairs,

health insurance, actors union fees and his own salary. Court documents shone a light on two different sets of financial records, one withheld until ordered released by the judge. Peters promised a thorough, independent financial review to assure donors. Instead, the “independent” review was conducted by people with close ties to Axanar, leading one to resign for conflict of interest. The reviewers only ever examined records selected for them by Peters himself. The much-hyped review turned out to be one page long, with a ¾-page financial summary explaining where \$1.4 million had gone. The report lacked any documentation and failed to weigh in on the soundness of Axanar’s financial systems – something Peters had promised. Just before the end of 2017, Peters at last revealed the price tag for Axanar Lite: \$150,000 that must be privately raised to produce the two 15-minute documentary-style segments.

No. 5

The Axanar Script

Axanar’s screenplay was the No. 8 story of 2016, which AxaMonitor contributor Jody Wheeler had reviewed. In 2017, that script leaked to the public, prompting much examination on the Internet. One critic, pseudo-nymously named Kate Stark, deconstructed the script in a daily blog that demonstrated serious problems with plot, pace and characterization in what Alec Peters had called the “fully revised and locked” screenplay as it essentially existed when CBS/Paramount filed suit in December 2015.

No. 4

End of Lawsuit

In a stinging repudiation of Axanar’s defense in the copyright infringement suit brought by CBS/Paramount, federal Judge R. Gary Klausner eliminated fair use as a defense, finding “the Axanar Works are not transformative [and] the Axanar Works are commercial.” He also ruled Axanar had to turn over two sets of financial records, which the defense had resisted. Days later, both sides announced a settlement permitting Axanar to be made under terms Alec Peters had rejected months before.

Sidebar

AXANAR ANTICS inspired three AxaMonitor publications explaining the copyright lawsuit, making sense of Axanar’s convoluted finances and providing daily coverage of Alec Peters’ ill-fated attempt to get fans to pay to save the beleaguered movie studio on which he’d pinned his hopes for an ongoing commercial production facility.

No. 3

Trek Film Academy

Following its 2016 permission to make fan films under strict guidelines, CBS granted a license allowing former Star Trek New Voyages producer James Cawley to open a Star Trek Film Academy based at his Original Series Set Tour in Ticonderoga, N.Y. Announced at Star Trek Las Vegas con, the school launches in 2018, uniting fans with Trek alumni to produce short films. Axanar’s Alec Peters was quick to claim credit for the idea Cawley had proposed years before he and Peters had even met.

No. 2

Creatives Quit Axanar

One right after another in November, Axanar director Robert Meyer Burnett and screenwriter Bill Hunt announced they had left the stalled project. Burnett had never been comfortable with Alec Peters’ decision to produce Axanar Lite in the same documentary style as Prelude to Axanar, and Hunt had evinced no interest in working on Axanar Lite. He had stayed until July only to fine-tune the feature length script expected by donors as one of many yet-to-be delivered perks.

Like he’d done with departed chief technologist Terry McIntosh and Prelude director Christian Gossett, Peters soon turned on Burnett and Hunt, claiming Burnett owed him money and belittling Hunt’s

contribution to the Axanar screenplay. Moreover, like he'd done when actor Tony Todd quit, Peters kept Hunt's departure quiet for months, intimating Hunt was still with the project.

No. 1

A Wounded Fandom

Whatever hope there was that Axanar's settlement with CBS/Paramount might tamp down the vitriol between Star Trek fans when it came to the wayward fan film, dissolved as 2017 wore on. Alec Peters forcibly issued refunds to silence donors seeking accountability in Kickstarter and Indiegogo forums for the failed production. Purges of critics on Axanar's Facebook pages happened after fans called out Peters' increasingly hostile social media rants. Entire discussion threads questioning his judgment disappeared overnight.

One fan, Phil Bates, for example, posted: "This page gets angrier and angrier every day. I've donated pretty healthy amounts to your project, I love Axanar, however the venom gets thicker and thicker over time it seems." Meanwhile, Peters' stalwart supporters carried out personal attacks against those they named as haters, while Axanar fans accused the haters of doing the same. Only the increasing possibility Axanar Lite may never be made has mitigated the attacks. Many who supported Axanar have turned their attacks against CBS and its new Star Trek series, Discovery, and their support to Fox television's TNG-alike, the Seth McFarlane-produced The Orville, in which he also stars.

Sidebar

In Store for 2018

The stories AXAMONITOR will cover in 2018 ... new Axanar writer PAUL JENKINS ... which ACTORS from Prelude will return ... pre-production for AXANAR LITE ... how will Axanar raise \$150K to produce AXANAR LITE? ... will OTHER WORLD COMPUTING continue its sponsorship of Axanar? ... the DR. SEUSS COPYRIGHT/TRADEMARK SUIT against Axanar advocate DAVID GERROLD.



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