

8

STAR TREK™

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U.S.S. EXCELSIOR™
NCC-2000

EXCELSIOR CLASS

LAUNCHED: 2290

LENGTH: 467 METRES

NUMBER OF DECKS: 32

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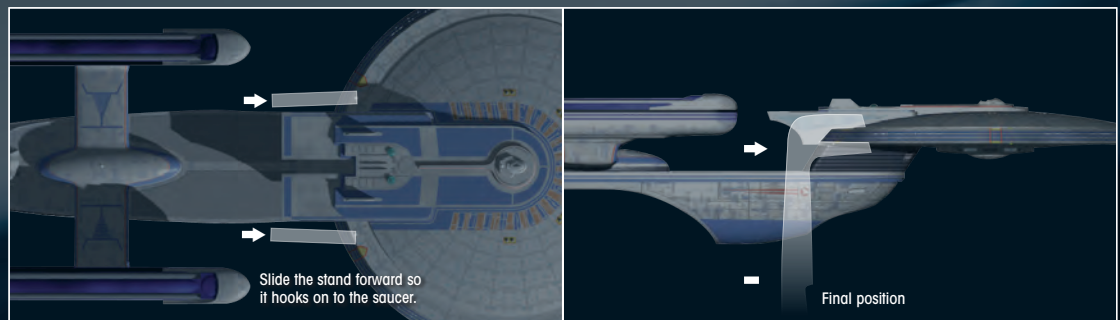
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NCC-2000

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U.S.S. EXCELSIOR NCC-2000

SPECIFICATION



REGISTRY:	NCC-2000
CLASS:	EXCELSIOR
CONSTRUCTED:	SAN FRANCISCO FLEET YARDS
LAUNCHED:	2290
LENGTH:	467 METRES
DECKS:	32
CREW:	500
TOP SPEED:	WARP 9
WEAPONRY:	TYPE-8 PHASER ARRAYS 3 PHOTON TORPEDO LAUNCHERS
CAPTAINS:	Styles (NX-2000), Hikaru Sulu

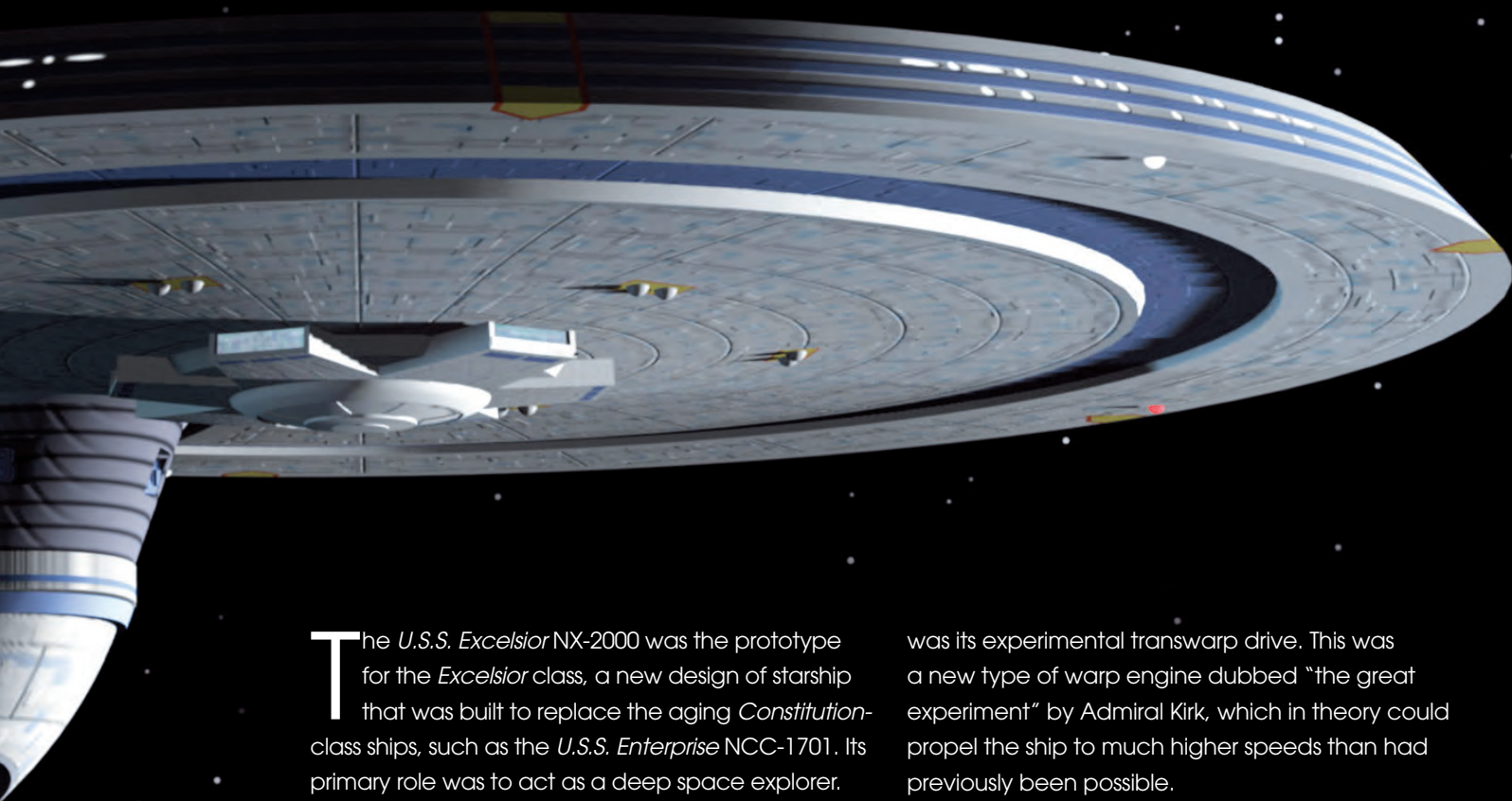


▼ At 467m long, the *U.S.S. Excelsior* was much larger than the *Constitution*-class vessels it replaced, and the deflector dish was enclosed within the pronounced curved bow.

U.S.S. EXCELSIOR

NCC-2000

Initially regarded as a failure, the *Excelsior*-class would become one of the most enduring designs in Starfleet's history.



The *U.S.S. Excelsior* NX-2000 was the prototype for the *Excelsior* class, a new design of starship that was built to replace the aging *Constitution*-class ships, such as the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701. Its primary role was to act as a deep space explorer.

The *Excelsior* still featured many of the classic design elements of Starfleet vessels, with a saucer section, engineering hull, and two warp nacelles supported by pylons. At 467m long and with 32 decks, it was much larger than the *Constitution* class and its engineering hull was distinguished by a graceful curved bow. More importantly, it incorporated Starfleet's latest thinking about several new technologies.

What made the *Excelsior* really different, though,



was its experimental transwarp drive. This was a new type of warp engine dubbed "the great experiment" by Admiral Kirk, which in theory could propel the ship to much higher speeds than had previously been possible.

In 2285, after nearly a decade of transwarp tests, the *Excelsior* was on the brink of being launched from Earth Spacedock for its first shakedown tests when it was prematurely pressed into action. Admiral Kirk and a skeleton crew had stolen the *U.S.S. Enterprise* in an unauthorised attempt to return to the Genesis planet and rejoin Spock's katra with his regenerated body. The *Excelsior*, under the command of Captain Styles, was ordered to pursue them and tow the *Enterprise* back to Spacedock.

TRANSWARP FAILURE

Supremely confident that the *Excelsior* would easily catch the *Enterprise*, Captain Styles was in for a shock when he gave the order to engage

◀ Captain Styles was in command of the *U.S.S. Excelsior* while it was still a prototype. He was certain that the *Excelsior*, with its new transwarp drive, would break the *Enterprise*'s speed records, but he was left humiliated when it ground to a halt shortly after launch.



◀ The bridge aboard the prototype *U.S.S. Excelsior* NX-2000 was large and spacious, but followed the traditional Starfleet arrangement. The captain's chair was located in the middle with the helm and navigation consoles in front, while all other work stations were positioned around the perimeter of the room.



▲ Senior officers aboard the *Excelsior* had their own private quarters, while many of the enlisted crew and junior officers had to share quarters.

the transwarp drive only for the ship to come to a shuddering halt. Scotty, who had been appointed the *Excelsior's* captain of engineering, had secretly removed the transwarp computer drive.

As it turned out, Scotty's act of sabotage was probably unnecessary. Several years later the field tests of the *Excelsior's* transwarp drive had still not been successful and it became increasingly clear that they never would be; the technology simply did not work in practice.

Rather than abandon the *Excelsior* all together, Starfleet fitted it with a conventional warp drive and it entered full service in 2290 with the registry NCC-2000. By this point it was four years behind schedule but the refitted *Excelsior* was a great success so Starfleet decided to put into production as a new

class of ship which became a mainstay of the fleet. In fact, the *Excelsior* had such an adaptable and enduring design that ships of this class remained in service for the next century and played a significant role in the Dominion War.

Apart from being larger, the fully-commissioned *Excelsior* differed from the earlier *Constitution* class in several ways. Most notably, the warp core was positioned toward the front of the ship and ran almost the entire height of the engineering hull from Deck 12 through to Deck 31. There were also two computer cores, one in each hull, so that if the saucer section was separated from the engineering hull, both sections could continue to operate entirely independently from one another. In addition to the fore and aft photon-torpedo launchers, the



◀ The bridge aboard the commissioned *U.S.S. Excelsior* NCC-2000 was smaller than the one fitted to the prototype. There was also a handrail encircling the central positions.

▶ Janice Rand, the communications officer aboard the *U.S.S. Excelsior* NCC-2000, had previously served aboard the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701, alongside Sulu, initially as Captain Kirk's yeoman.



◀ In 2285 the *Excelsior* was based at Earth Spacedock where she underwent final preparations before her initial shakedown tests. At the time her advanced technologies were seen as the future for Starfleet.

▶ The *Excelsior* was near the Klingon border when it was hit by an enormous shockwave generated by the destruction of Praxis.



weapons systems were also upgraded with Type-8 phaser emitters.

REPLACEMENT BRIDGE

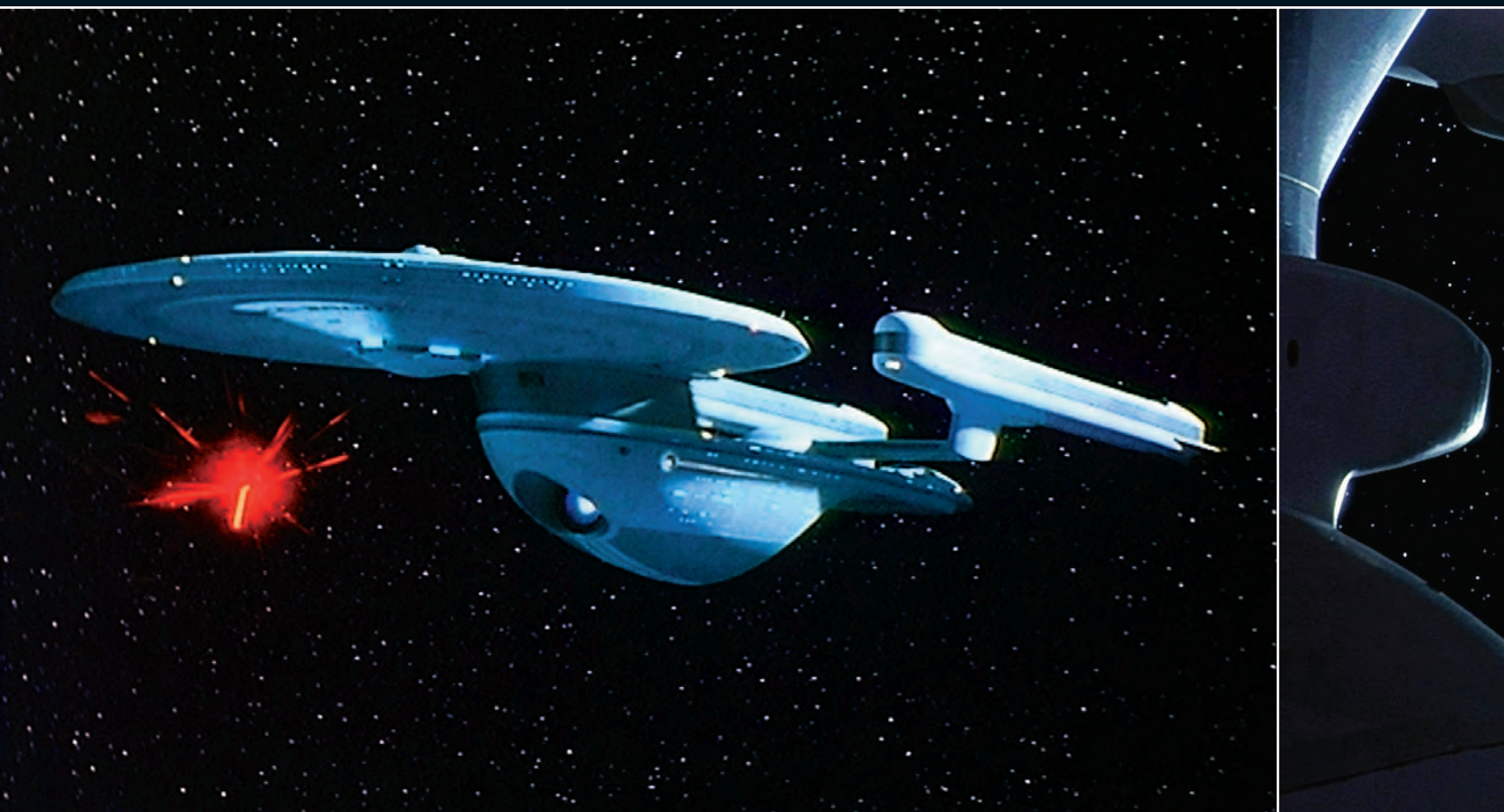
While still a prototype, the *Excelsior* had a larger bridge module, but before 2290, it was replaced with a smaller unit that was more reminiscent of the bridge on the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-A.

By 2290, the *Excelsior* was under the command of Captain Hikaru Sulu, who had previously served as the helm officer on board the *U.S.S. Enterprise*. Other familiar crew members included the communications officer Janice Rand, who had also served on the *Enterprise*, and Ensign Tuvok, who would later become the tactical and security officer aboard the *U.S.S. Voyager* NCC-74656.



DATA FEED

The experimental transwarp drive fitted to the *U.S.S. Excelsior* NX-2000 relied on an extremely complicated set of equations that boosted the power of a conventional warp engine in much the same way that the Kelvans had modified the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701's engines in 2268. However, although the systems could be made to work in computer models, in practice it proved unworkable and the project was abandoned.



▲ The *Excelsior* was equipped with several torpedo launchers, including two on the neck section and two lower down on either side of the deflector dish.

The *Excelsior*'s first assignment was a three-year mission cataloguing gaseous planetary anomalies in the Beta Quadrant. In 2293, the *Excelsior* was returning home when an enormous subspace shockwave smashed into the ship and only the quick thinking of Captain Sulu, who managed to give the order to raise the shields just in time, prevented her from being torn apart.

The crew traced the origin of the shockwave to Praxis, a Klingon moon and site of their key energy production facility, which had been destroyed. Sulu immediately offered his ship's assistance, but he

was warned off by the Klingons and told to remain outside the Neutral Zone.

Two days later, Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy were arrested for the assassination of Klingon Chancellor Gorkon and the *Excelsior* was earmarked to take part in 'Operation Retrieve', a mission to rescue them from Klingon custody. When this mission was abandoned due to fears that it would jeopardize the upcoming peace talks with the Klingons, Captain Sulu, out of intense loyalty to his former crewmates, decided to ignore Starfleet orders and mount a rescue attempt anyway.

The *Excelsior* tried to sneak into Klingon space by approaching through Azure Nebula, a giant interstellar gas cloud, which Sulu hoped would blind Klingon sensors to their approach. Unfortunately, the *Excelsior* was detected by a Klingon *K't'inga*-class battle cruiser commanded by Kang and Sulu was forced to lie, explaining that they had got lost inside the nebula due to a navigational sensor malfunction.

Wary of this explanation, Kang insisted on escorting the *Excelsior* back to Federation space,

► Kang's *K't'inga*-class battlecruiser discovered the *Excelsior* trying to sneak into Klingon space via the Azure Nebula. Kang attempted to escort the *Excelsior* back to Federation space, but his ship was disabled when the *Excelsior* ignited the sirillium inside the nebula.





but Ensign Tuvok suggested a plan whereby they could escape Kang's attentions. As the *Excelsior* was leaving the gas cloud, she fired a modulated positron beam that ignited the highly combustible sirillium inside the nebula and the resultant explosion temporarily disabled Kang's ship long enough for them to escape. The *Excelsior* resumed its course to the Klingon homeworld, but its presence was now known and it was not long before she was intercepted by three battlecruisers. Heavily outgunned, Sulu was reluctantly forced to withdraw and abandon the rescue attempt.

HISTORIC ACTIONS

As it turned out, the crew of the *Enterprise* were able to rescue their crewmates, and the *Excelsior* played a vital role in the following events at Khitomer. The *Excelsior* practically flew itself apart in the rush to come to the *U.S.S. Enterprise's* aid after it came under sustained attack from General Chang's cloaked *Bird-of-Prey*.

The *Excelsior* reached Khitomer with the *Enterprise* just moments away from destruction and provided

the distraction of another target for Chang's *Bird-of-Prey*. This bought Spock and McCoy the time to reconfigure a photon torpedo that would home in on the vented plasma gas from the cloaked *Bird-of-Prey*. When this torpedo hit the *Bird-of-Prey*, it was exposed and both the *Excelsior* and *Enterprise* were able to concentrate all of their fire and destroy it.

Without the *Excelsior*, it is no exaggeration to say that the *Enterprise-A* would have been destroyed, the Khitomer peace talks would have failed and all-out war between the Federation and the Klingons, with the loss of thousands, possibly millions, of lives, would have been all but inevitable.

▲ The *Excelsior* played a vital role at Khitomer when it arrived just in time to save the *U.S.S. Enterprise* and help to destroy General Chang's *Bird-of-Prey*.

DATA FEED

Sulu's first name, Hikaru, had never been revealed on screen until *STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY* in 1991 despite the fact that the character had been created some 25 years earlier in 1966. The name Hikaru had, however, been used by fans since it was introduced by Vonda N. McIntyre's 1981 *STAR TREK* novel, *The Entropy Effect*.



PHASER LOCATIONS

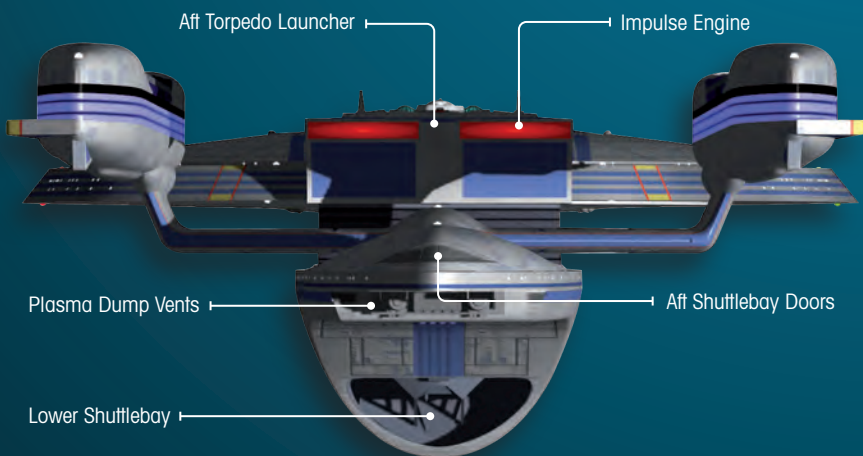
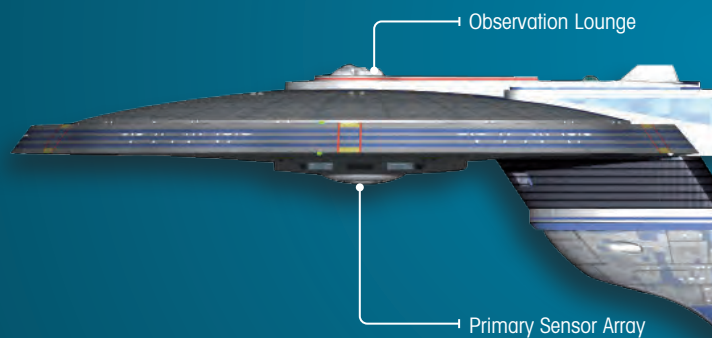
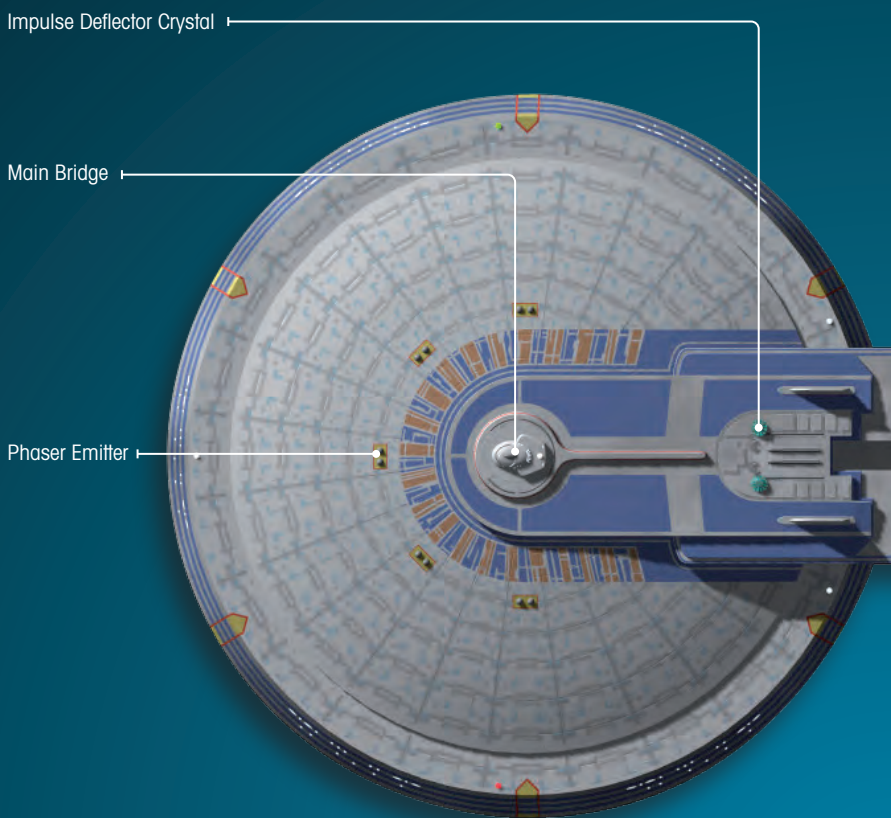
When it entered service the *Excelsior* class was outfitted with type 8 phaser emitters in five dual phaser emplacements on the forward saucer section, and one dual emplacement on the aft of the saucer. Phaser banks were also positioned laterally, located port and starboard, near the point that the primary and secondary hulls meet, as well as one emplacement located between the nacelles. Early versions of the *Excelsior* class also had two impulse engines on the rear of the saucer section, but later updated designs featured four impulse engines in the same location.

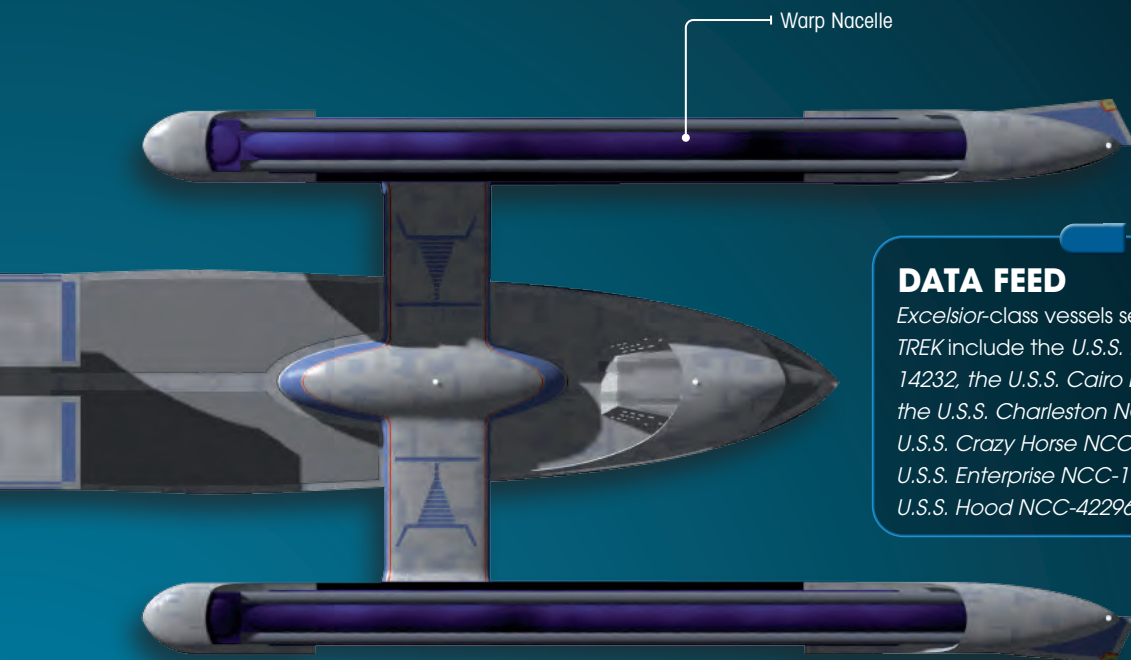


▲ The *U.S.S. Excelsior NCC-2000* had just two impulse engines, but some later versions of the *Excelsior*-class had four.



▲ *Excelsior*-class ships played a major part in the Dominion War, including taking part in the battle to regain the Chin'toka system.

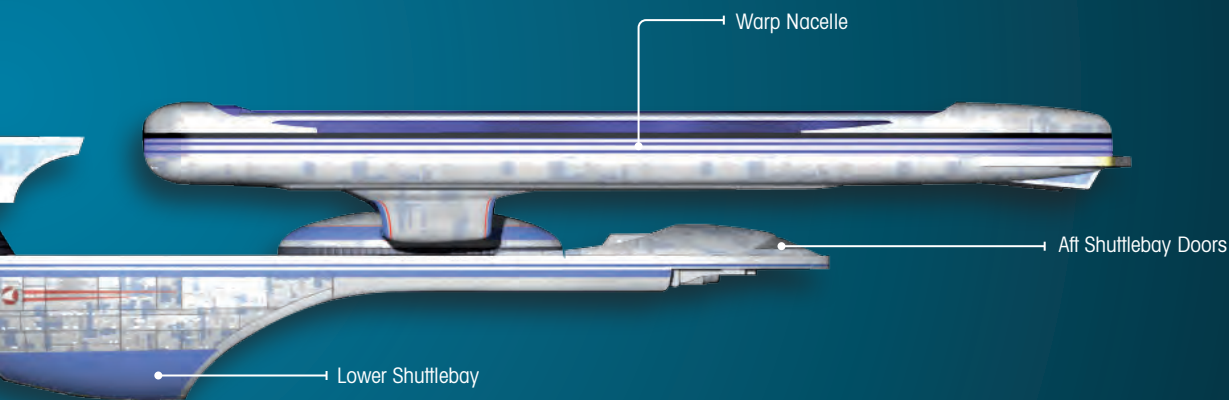




Warp Nacelle

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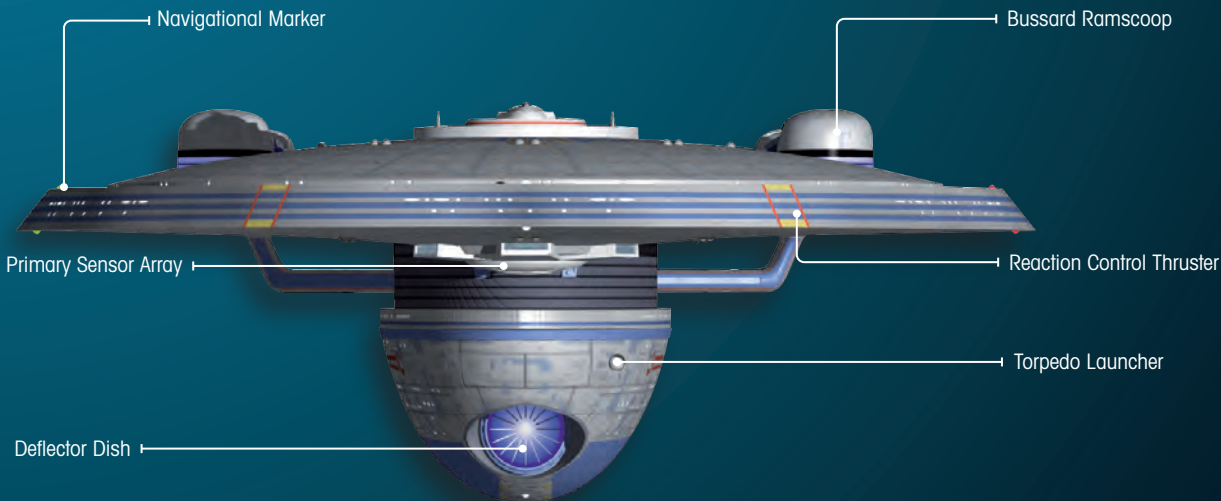
Excelsior-class vessels seen in *STAR TREK* include the *U.S.S. Berlin* NCC-14232, the *U.S.S. Cairo* NCC-42136, the *U.S.S. Charleston* NCC-42285, the *U.S.S. Crazy Horse* NCC-50446, the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-B and the *U.S.S. Hood* NCC-42296.



Warp Nacelle

Aft Shuttlebay Doors

Lower Shuttlebay



Navigational Marker

Bussard Ramscoop

Primary Sensor Array

Reaction Control Thruster

Deflector Dish

Torpedo Launcher

DEDICATION PLAQUES

The *U.S.S. Excelsior* NCC-2000's dedication plaque featured the motto, "No matter where you go, there you are," a quotation taken from the film 'Buckaroo Banzai'. This motto also featured on the dedication plaques of the *U.S.S. Hathaway* NCC-2593 and the *U.S.S. Phoenix* NCC-65420.

COMPUTER VOICE

The elevator computer voice on board the *U.S.S. Excelsior NX-2000* in *STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK* was credited to 'Frank Force' although it was actually supplied by Leonard Nimoy.

TRIBUTE SHOW

The *STAR TREK: VOYAGER* episode 'Flashback', which featured the *U.S.S. Excelsior*, was made to celebrate *STAR TREK*'s 30th anniversary and served as an homage to the original series just as the *DEEP SPACE NINE* episode 'Trials and Tribble-ations' did.

▼ This picture shows Bill George's study model of the *U.S.S. Excelsior NX-2000* that was chosen by Leonard Nimoy.



DESIGNING THE



U.S.S. EXCELSIOR

The design of the *U.S.S. Excelsior* not only wowed cinema audiences in 1984, but went on to be the most enduring ship in *STAR TREK* history.

The script for *STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK* called for a number of new designs of starship, including the *U.S.S. Excelsior NX-2000*. This vessel was supposed to be an advanced design that made the *U.S.S. Enterprise* look old and out of date. The script described it as having, “similar lines to the *Enterprise*, but bigger, sleeker – it sits in her moorings like the new queen of space.”

An unusual approach was taken

to designing the ships for *STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK*. Instead of concept designers sketching out detailed drawings to be approved by the director and effects supervisors before the model was built, basic study models were created in a collaborative effort with the model makers and were then submitted for approval.

This process involved visual artists, David Carson and Nilo Rodis-Jamero of Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), producing

their artwork of the ship before handing it over directly to the model makers Steve Gawley, Bill George and their team, who then built study models, incorporating their own interpretation of the artwork.

As David Carson later remembered, “We’d churn out quite a few sketches. Then the ones that were most promising we might polish up a little in color for presentation. It wasn’t uncommon for me to do a drawing that would inspire



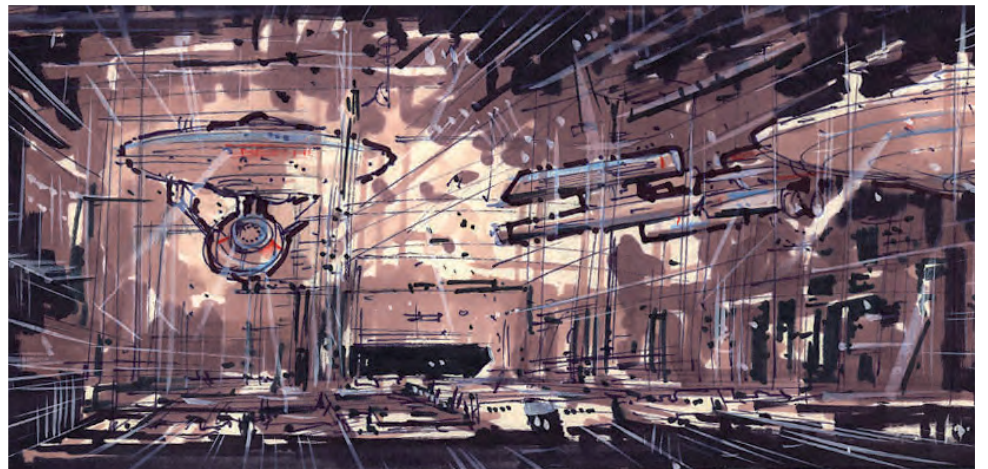
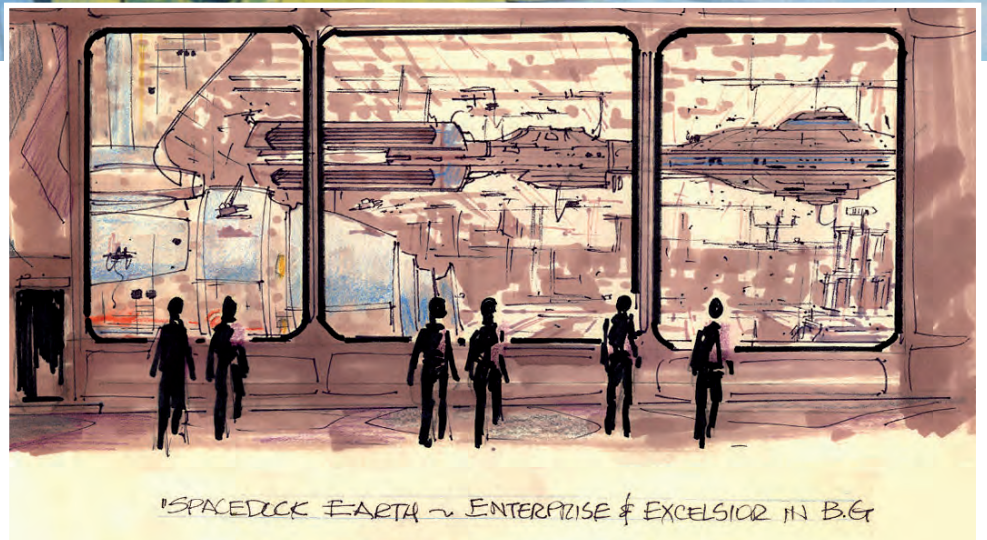
▲ Visual artists David Carson and Nilo Rodis produced storyboards and concept art that feature their original design for the *Excelsior*.

► These illustrations show a longer, sleeker *Excelsior* with an unusual four-nacelle design.

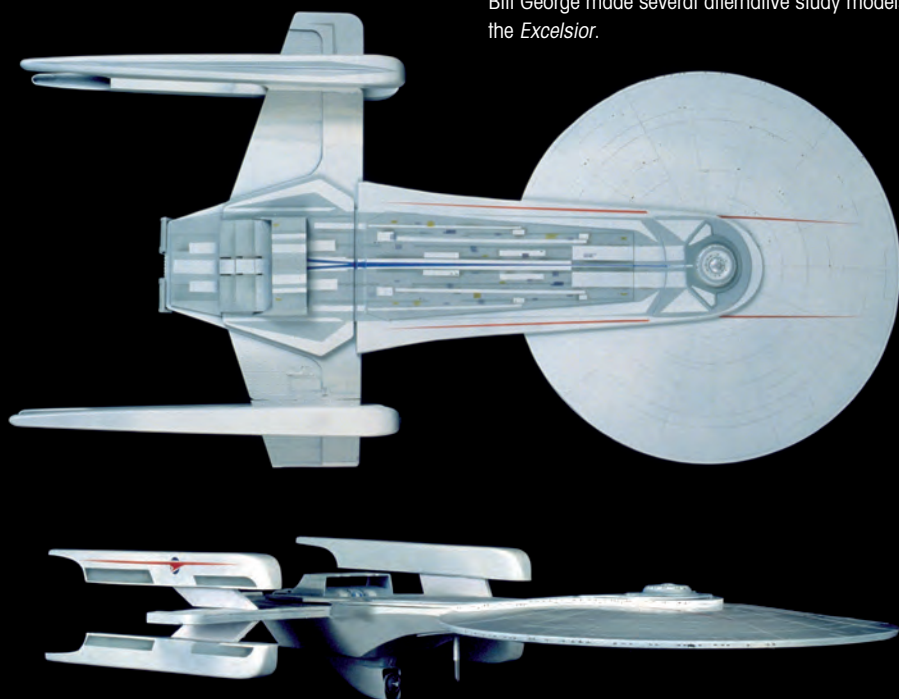
Nilo, who would then turn it into his own drawing that would be much more impressive! He would often inspire me.”

MODEL APPRAISAL

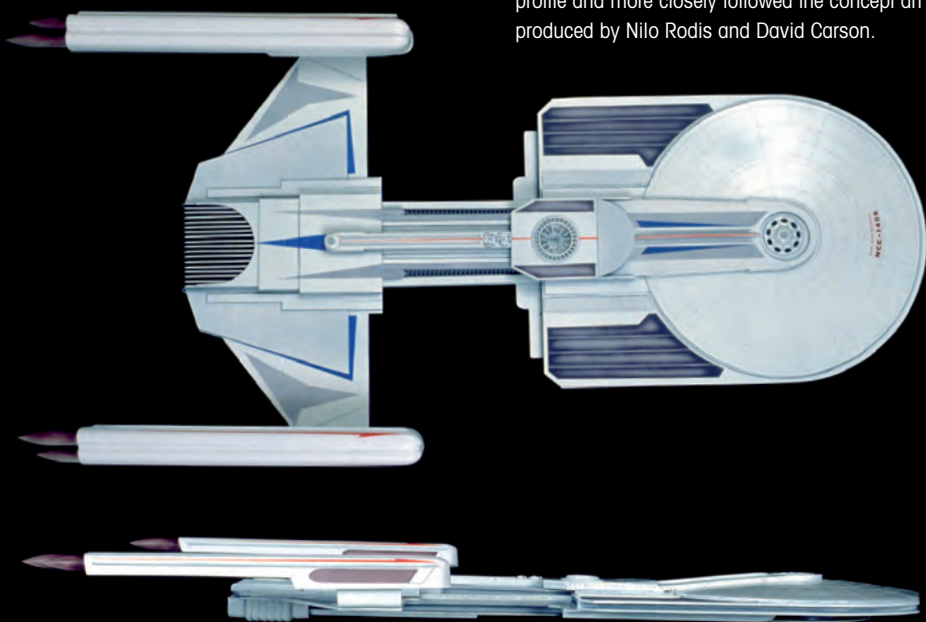
Once the sketches had been turned into study models, they were presented to producer Harve Bennett and director Leonard Nimoy for appraisal. As supervising model maker Steve Gawley put it, “You had all these models sitting on a table so that the director could really get a feel for what we were talking about. It just made everything easier to understand, and ensured that everybody was on the same page.



▼ The model making team led by Steve Gawley and Bill George made several alternative study models of the *Excelsior*.



▼ These study models of the *Excelsior* had a very thin profile and more closely followed the concept art produced by Nilo Rodis and David Carson.



▼ This version is probably the closest to Nilo Rodis's original concept drawings.



It also made it easier to give cost estimates."

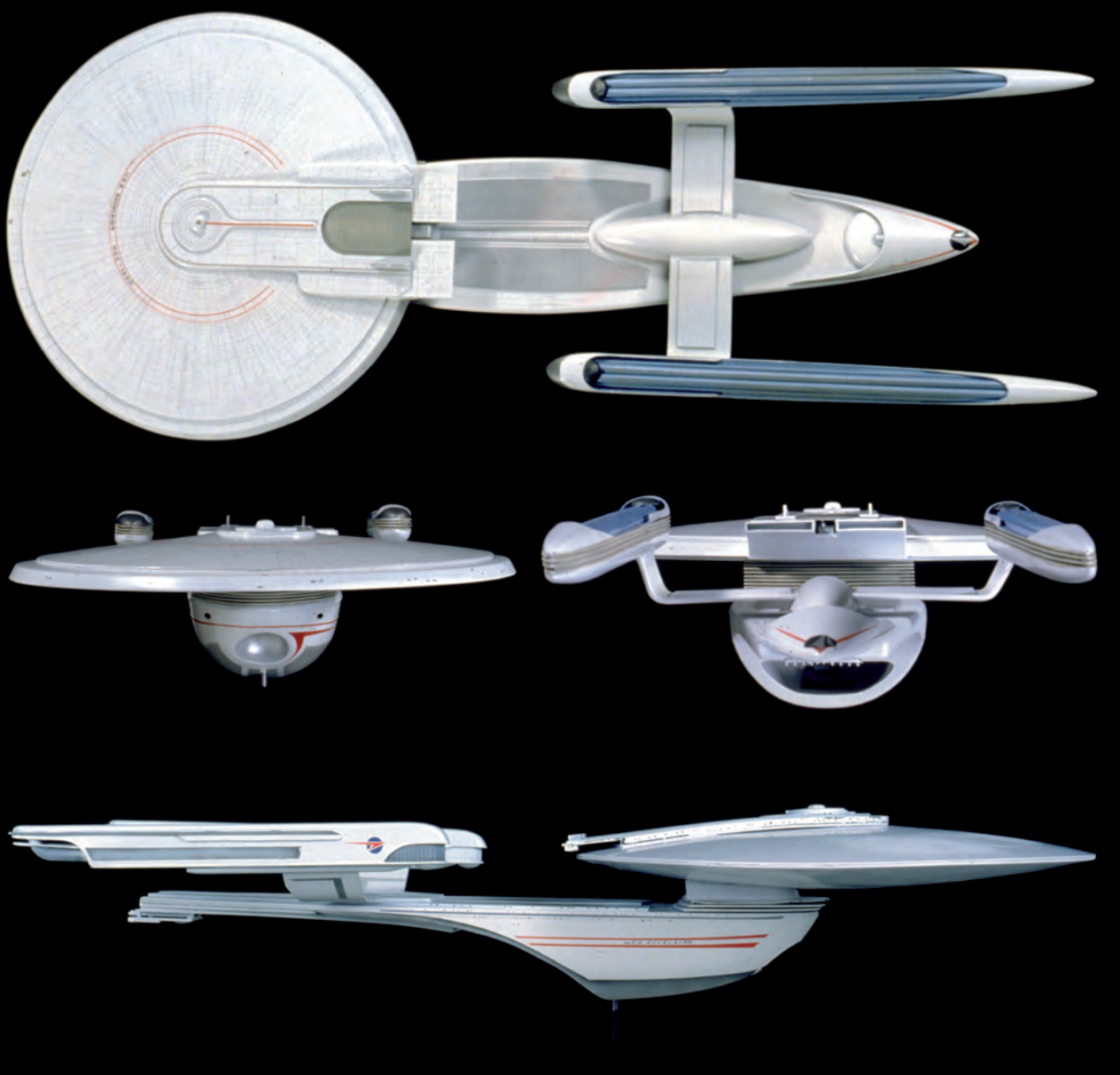
Director of Photography Ken Ralston elaborated further: "When Leonard (Nimoy) and Harve (Bennett) and (associate producer) Ralph Winter came to meetings we presented them with three dimensional models. It really is a lot better doing it that way because they can physically see how different (camera) angles would work."

The process still began with a quick sketch. In the case of the *Excelsior* Carson explained, "We kicked around a few different ways to go with the *Excelsior*, but when Nilo did the drawing that led to the eventual design that was it, because it was very well received. It seemed to be a believable extension – a kind of next-generation design."

PHYSICAL 'SKETCHES'

The drawings were then sent down to ILM's model shop where the study models were built. As Bill George explained, "The art department had done a number of sketches. All of them were very different and very futuristic. They still had the basic theme of the dish and the engines, but they did not look like the *Enterprise* at all. I was given the job of building prototypes of those sketches. Leonard Nimoy was going to come up and look at them and hopefully choose one."

All the sketches of the *Excelsior* were long and thin and when George finished the study models with plenty of time to spare, Carson suggested that he produce another study model using his own ideas. As George recalled, he decided to take a different approach that drew on a Japanese aesthetic: "When you're designing something you want to come up with a take on it that will drive the design. At the time I was really into Japanese design, so I thought, 'OK, what would the *Enterprise* look like if the Japanese designed it?'



The original *Excelsior* model that featured in *STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK* was sold at auction in 2006 (after it had been redressed as the *U.S.S. Lakota NCC-42768*). It had been expected to make between \$3,000-\$5,000, but actually went for \$110,000.

Although the *Excelsior* is supposed to be considerably larger than its predecessor, the physical model of the *Excelsior* is actually 12 inches (30cm) smaller than the one for the *Enterprise*.

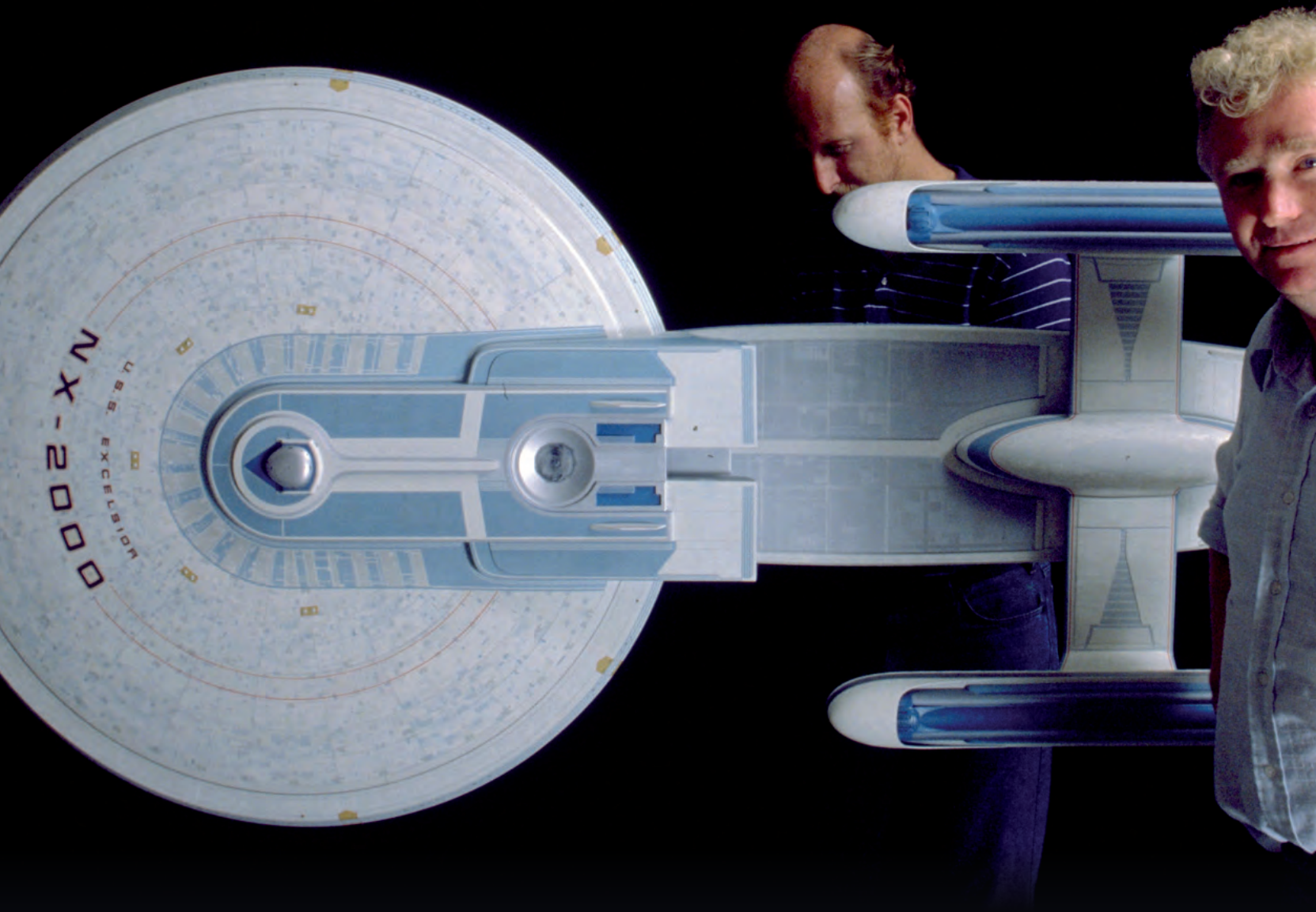
That was the basis of what I came up with for the *Excelsior*.”

George built a final study model, which had a deeper profile and a more rounded secondary hull section. To his surprise, Nimoy chose his version as the template for the final studio model. “When we laid out all these things on the table, he pointed to the study model that I had done and said, ‘That one.’ And I think it was just because it was so much more familiar. It was quite a surprise when I found out that was the one he wanted. There were a couple of

the other study models that I really liked, and I certainly hadn’t tried to figure out which one he was going to choose.”

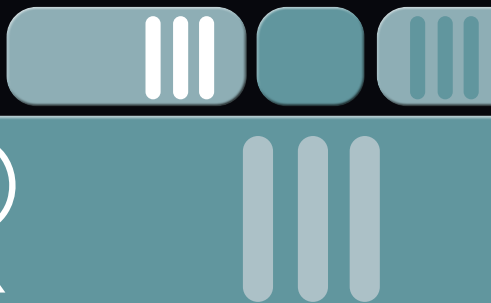
As it transpired, the model of the *Excelsior* that was designed and built for the movie was so successful that it would go on to appear in four more *STAR TREK* films and in all three of the *STAR TREK* television series that were set in the 24th century. Apart from the hero *Enterprise* ships, this has probably made the *Excelsior*-class the most frequently seen ship in the *STAR TREK* franchise – no small achievement.

▲ This study model built by Bill George looked much more like the original *Enterprise* than the sketches that were produced by Nilo Rodis.



▲ The original 7.5-ft long model of the *Excelsior* built by Industrial Light & Magic.

STUDIO MODELS OF THE EXCELSIOR



There have been just two physical models of the *Excelsior* but they have 'acted' as countless different *Excelsior*-class vessels.

Once the design of the *U.S.S. Excelsior* had been approved, a 7.5-foot-long studio model was built at Industrial Light & Magic ready for filming. It was constructed under the supervision of Steve Gawley, an experienced modelmaker who had previously worked on the original *Star Wars* movies. He ensured that the model of the *Excelsior* was made for easy handling by building it out of lightweight vacuformed pieces with easy access to the inside of the model so that the lighting could be altered if necessary.

This *Excelsior* shooting model in this configuration went on to make an additional appearance in *STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME* with stock footage of the *Excelsior* from this film also used in *STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER*.

In 1987, Gawley tidied up this model and redressed it as the *U.S.S. Hood* so it could be filmed for *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*'s pilot episode *Encounter at Farpoint*. A library of stock footage of the model was also made at this time and used throughout the seven seasons of *THE NEXT GENERATION* whenever an *Excelsior*-class ship made an appearance.

In 1991, the model was more fully refurbished for its appearance in *STAR TREK: VI THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY* when it appeared as Captain Sulu's *U.S.S. Excelsior NCC-2000*. It

also underwent a few modifications: the bridge module was replaced with a smaller one, the large impulse deflector crystal was replaced with two smaller ones and the rounded rear section was replaced with a more angular one.

FURTHER APPEARANCES

A year later, the model was filmed in this configuration one last time at Image G, a visual effects company, for its appearance as the *U.S.S. Melbourne NCC-62043* in *DEEP SPACE NINE*'s pilot episode, *Emissary*. Following this, in 1994, the model was converted into the *U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701-B* for *STAR TREK GENERATIONS*. The model's final screen appearance was in the *DEEP SPACE NINE* episode *Paradise Lost* when it was redressed as the *U.S.S. Lakota NCC-42768*.

When the *Excelsior* was needed for the *VOYAGER* episode *Flashback* it was discovered that the original model could not be returned to its original configuration without causing damage to it. A new one was therefore built by *STAR TREK*'s regular TV modelmaker Greg Jein at approximately half the scale of the original model. This made it much easier to handle and film at Image G and this model continued to be reused until a CGI *Excelsior* was built for the later seasons of *DEEP SPACE NINE* and *VOYAGER*.



▲ Adjustments were made to the original 7.5 foot-long model of the *Excelsior* after its first screen outing in *STAR TREK III*.



▲ The original model of the *Excelsior* made its final screen appearance as the *U.S.S. Lakota* in an episode of *DS9*.

ON SCREEN



TRIVIA

STAR TREK fan Christian Slater made a brief cameo in *STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY* playing the *Excelsior's* communications officer, who wakes Captain Sulu to ask what they should tell Starfleet about the whereabouts of the *Enterprise*. This role was made possible partly because Christian Slater's mother, Mary Jo Slater, was the casting director for *STAR TREK VI*. Slater's godfather, Michael Zaslow, also appeared in two episodes of *STAR TREK: THE ORIGINAL SERIES* and in *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT*.



The last time an actual studio model of the *Excelsior* was used for filming was in the *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE* season six episode 'Behind the Lines'.



In 1987, Industrial Light & Magic was contracted to create visual effects for the *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* pilot 'Encounter at Farpoint'. As part of the job they compiled a library of stock footage, that featured several shots of the *Excelsior*, which was re-used extensively throughout the entire run of the series, often combined with new footage. Remarkably, no new footage of the *Excelsior* model was ever shot for *TNG*.

- FIRST APPEARANCE:** STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK
- MOVIE APPEARANCES:** STAR TREK III, IV, V & VI
- TV APPEARANCE:** STAR TREK: VOYAGER
- DESIGNED BY:** Bill George, Nilo Rodis-Jamero, David Carson

KEY APPEARANCES

STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK

Although Kirk has defeated Khan, the price has been high – Spock is dead and the *Enterprise* is damaged. Matters only get worse when Starfleet tells Kirk that the *Enterprise* is to be decommissioned. When Kirk's crew report to Spacedock they are confronted by the *Excelsior*, the latest thing in Starfleet design, a faster, sleeker starship that makes the *Enterprise* look old. Its captain is convinced that his ship is superior in every way, but somehow Kirk and his crew must evade this extraordinary vessel and return to Genesis where they will have a chance to resurrect their fallen comrade.

STAR TREK VI:

THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

The *U.S.S. Excelsior* is nearing the end of a three-year mission when it is hit by a massive subspace shockwave caused by the destruction of a Klingon moon. This disaster also damages the Klingon homeworld's atmosphere and the Empire faces extinction. The Klingons one hope for survival is peace with the Federation, but there are many on both sides who fear this change. A conspiracy to scupper the upcoming treaty is put into action and it is left to the crews of the *Enterprise* and the *Excelsior* to expose the conspirators and save the peace talks.

COMING NEXT

U.S.S.
DEFIANT

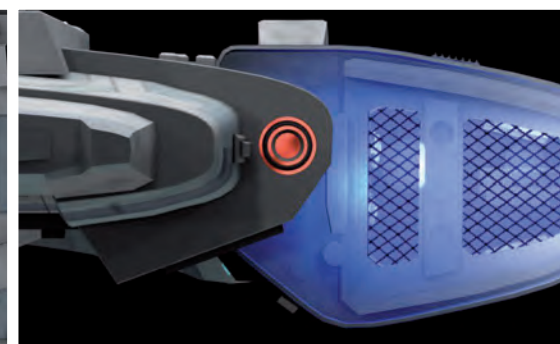


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- In-depth profile of the *U.S.S. Defiant NX-74205*, Starfleet's first ever warship, built in response to the Borg threat
- How the design of the *U.S.S. Defiant* evolved
- The story behind the studio model of the *Defiant*



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