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**NCC-63549**

AKIRA CLASS

LAUNCHED: 2370s

LENGTH: 464.43 METRES

MAX SPEED: WARP 9.8

# THE AKIRA CLASSES

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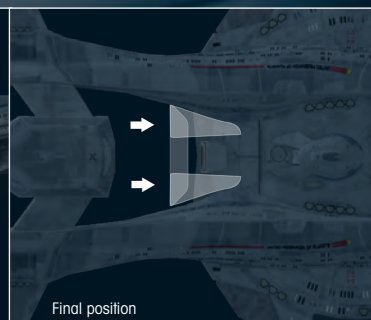
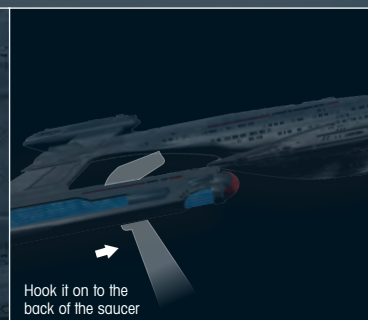
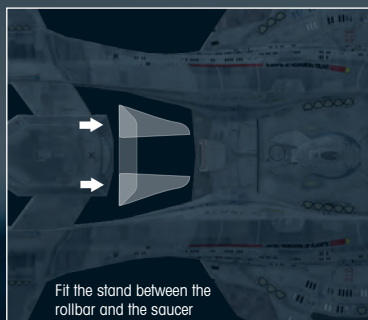
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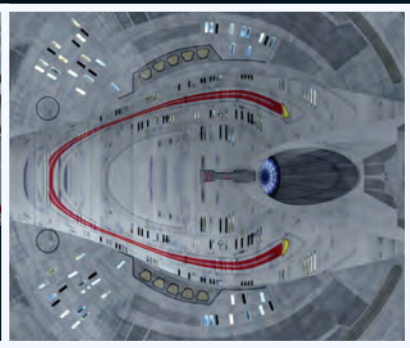
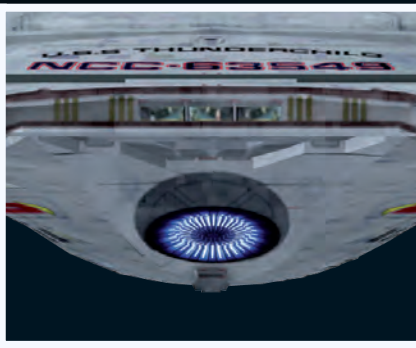
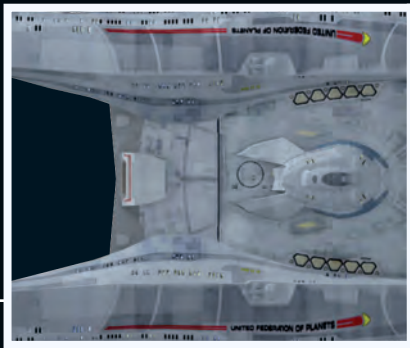
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# AKIRA CLASS

## SPECIFICATION



CLASS:	AKIRA
CONSTRUCTED:	ANTARES FLEET YARDS
LAUNCHED:	LATE 24th CENTURY
LENGTH:	464.43 METRES
CREW:	500 (APPROX)
TOP SPEED:	WARP 9.8
WEAPONRY:	WEAPONS POD WITH MULTIPLE LAUNCHERS, PLUS SAUCER- MOUNTED LAUNCHERS AND PHASER STRIPS



► The *Akira* class did not have a secondary engineering hull, but comprised of a large saucer section with a catamaran-style double hull on top, while the warp nacelles hung down below.



# THE AKIRA CLASS

The *Akira* class was in service in the late 24th century and saw action in conflicts with the Borg and the Dominion.

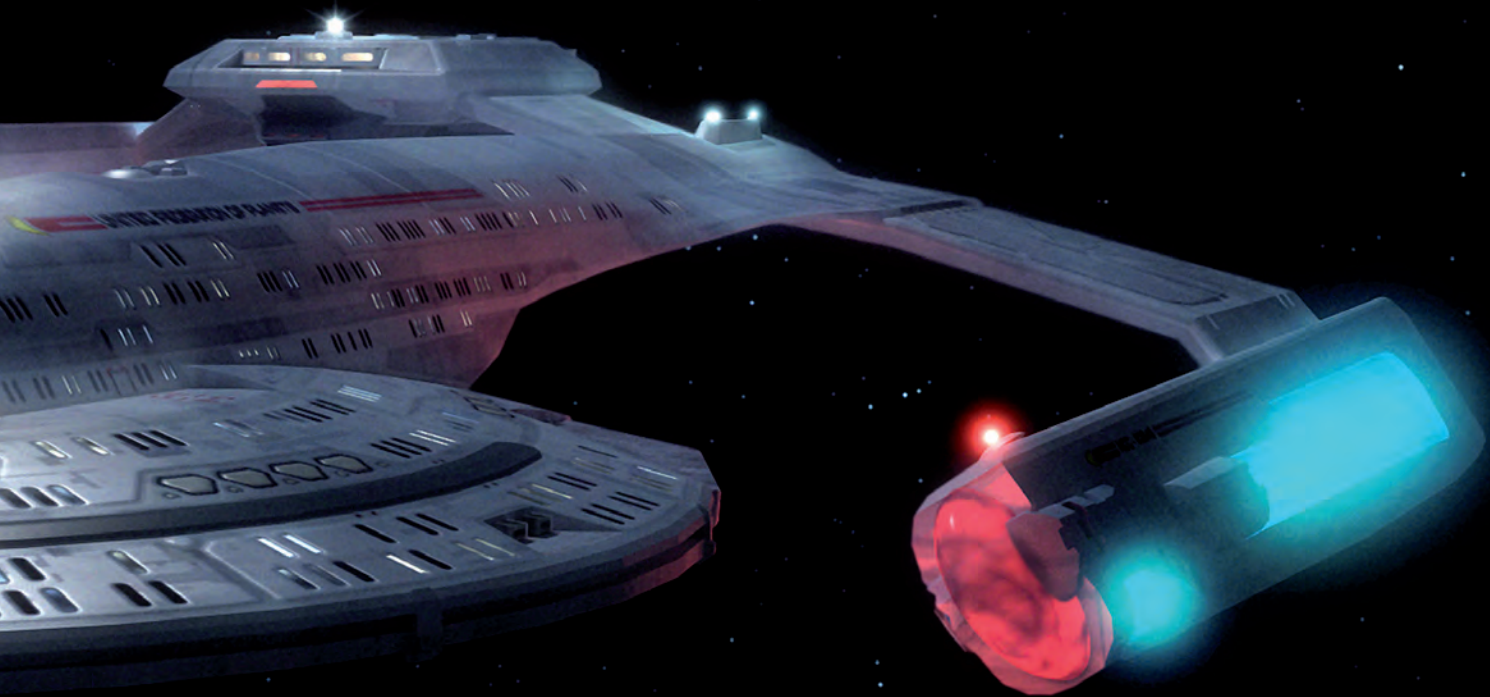
The *Akira* class entered Starfleet service in the latter half of the 24th century and was built in response to the urgent threats posed by both the Cardassian Wars and the Borg. While exploration remained important to Starfleet, Federation space had become potentially much more dangerous and the fleet had to be equipped to meet these darker times. As such, the *Akira* class was designed much more for patrol and combat duties.

Unlike many other Starfleet ships that featured a secondary engineering hull, the *Akira* class comprised of a single primary saucer section, onto

the top of which was built a split catamaran-style hull. These beams extended back past the rear of the saucer to a spar, upon the top of which a weapons pod was mounted, while the warp nacelles hung down below on either side.

#### SLEEK PROFILE

Despite the lack of a secondary engineering hull, the *Akira* class was still 464.43m long, meaning that the saucer section was of a similar size to the saucer section of the U.S.S. *Enterprise* NCC-1701-E. This meant the *Akira* class presented a much narrower profile and thus less of a target



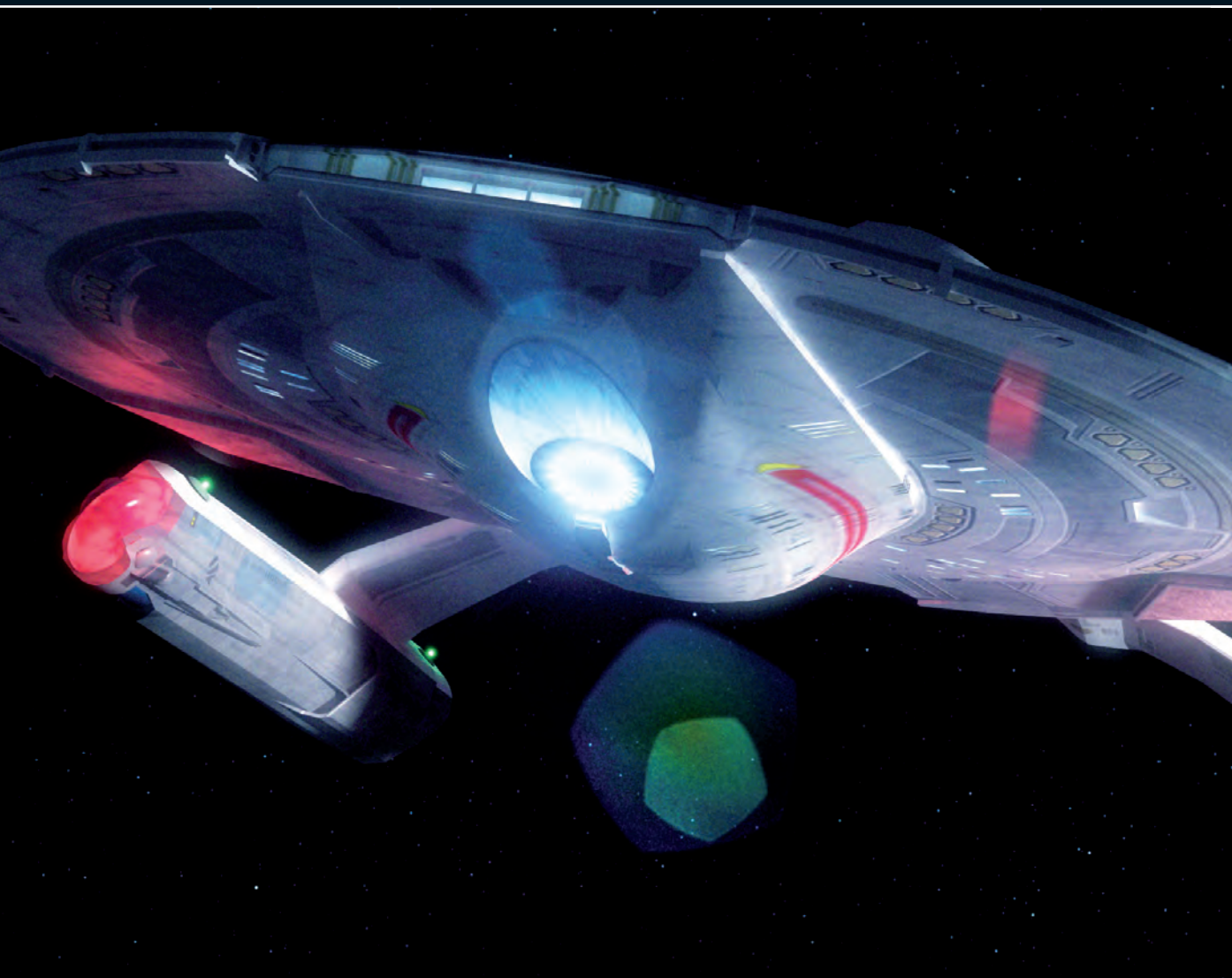
in combat, while the absence of a dedicated engineering hull did nothing to diminish the speed of the ship as it was capable of a top speed of warp 9.8.

One of the main features of the *Akira* class was the weapons pod that was situated on top of the boom that connected the two warp nacelles. This pod featured an incredible array of weaponry, including seven forward-facing torpedo launchers with a row of four positioned directly above a row of three. The middle two launchers on the top row were for the more advanced quantum torpedoes, while the rest were for photon torpedoes.



The weapons pod also featured a further six launchers towards the rear with three on each side, providing comprehensive defensive coverage to the aft of the ship. In addition, the pod was equipped with tactical sensors and, for more exploration- and research-orientated missions, could be converted to carry more specialised science sensor equipment.

◀ The weapons pod on top of the spar behind the bridge featured multiple torpedo launchers, providing additional firepower to the phaser strips and launchers on the saucer. The *Akira* class also featured a fly-through shuttlebay, allowing auxiliary craft to be launched through openings in the nose of the ship and return through doors at the rear.



► Several *Akira*-class ships were part of the Starfleet armada that fought the Borg at the Battle of Sector 001, including at least one that was destroyed.



▲ The *Akira* class featured three shuttlebay doors that sat side-by-side in a notch at the front of the saucer. This allowed the simultaneous deployment of multiple shuttlecraft, helping to save vital time in an emergency or combat situation.

Supplementary to the weapons pod, there were a number of torpedo launchers on the saucer section itself. The main ones were located on the ventral side, above and below the deflector dish, and, unusually, two more launchers on each side of the saucer, firing out to port and starboard.

There were also six type-10 phaser emitters, with the main ones encircling most of the saucer section on both the dorsal and ventral sides.

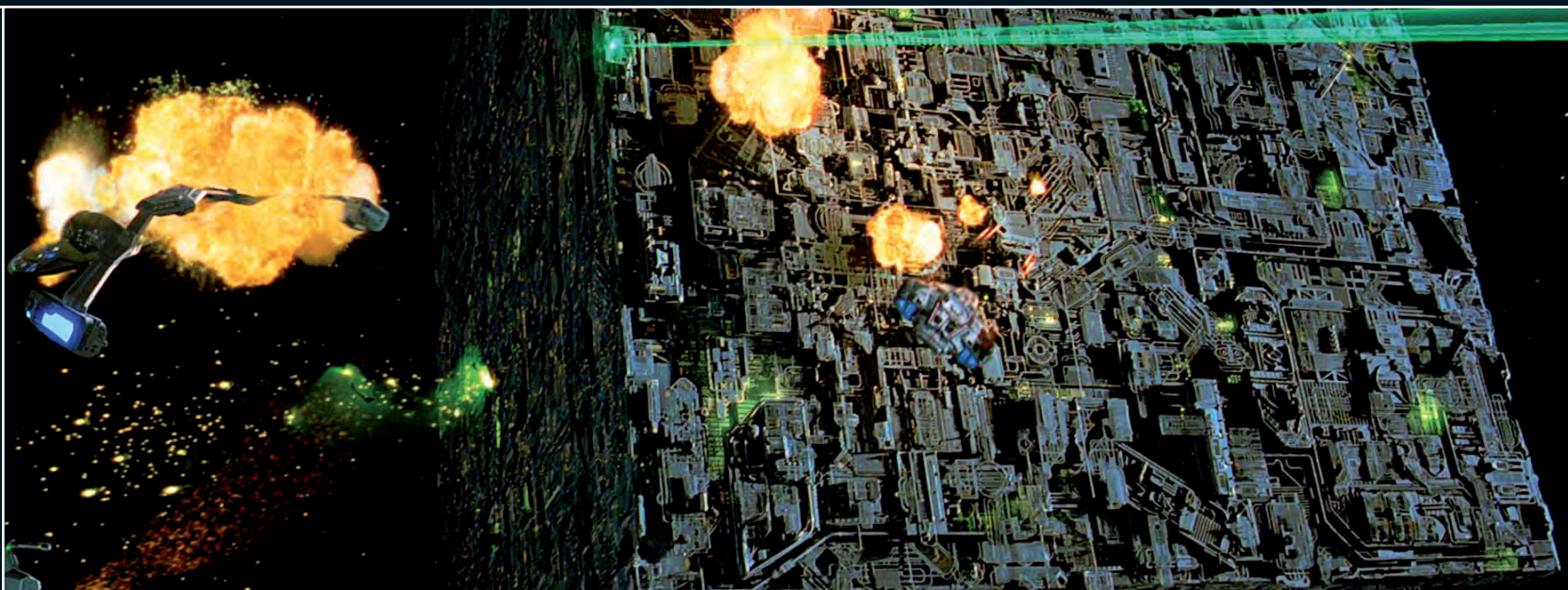
#### FLY-THROUGH SHUTTLEBAY

One of the reasons why the *Akira* class was so heavily defended was that it acted as a carrier, housing a large number of shuttlecraft. It was designed with a fly-through shuttlebay so that multiple auxiliary craft could be launched simultaneously through three doors that sat side-by-side in the notch at the front of the saucer. The shuttles could then return to the ship in quick

succession through doors at the rear of the saucer, behind the bridge.

The ability to quickly launch and dock shuttles was a major advantage in a combat situation where smaller, more manoeuvrable 'fighter' type craft proved vital. This was particularly true during the Cardassian Wars, as Starfleet had to respond quickly to Cardassian incursions into disputed territories. They were also very effective in pursuing the ships of the renegade Maquis organisation, which often hid in the Badlands where larger ships were more adversely affected by intense plasma storms and gravitational anomalies.

The fact that the *Akira* class carried so many shuttles also made it an excellent rescue ship for evacuation efforts. This was particularly useful in areas where transporters did not work, as the shuttles could be rapidly deployed to pick up survivors or vulnerable colonists, return quickly to



◀ More than 600 ships, including *Akira*-class vessels, were launched in 2374 as part of 'Operation Return', in a successful effort to retake *Deep Space 9* from Dominion control.



the ship and then be launched again.

The overall layout of the *Akira* class was designed with the protection of its shuttlecraft very much in mind. Extra defensive shield emitters were positioned on either side of the launch bay doors at the front of the saucer, while the rear shuttle doors provided a safe and calm entry point as they were protected by being tucked down within the catamaran split hull. The main bridge, too, was afforded extra protection by the raised split hull, as it was nestled down between these structures and not exposed on top of the saucer as the bridge was on most other Starfleet ships.

Overall, the *Akira* class proved very effective during the Cardassian Wars, performing patrol and protection missions among outer Federation territories, helping to defend vulnerable colonies. Its formidable array of weaponry and ability to rapidly deploy multiple shuttlecraft proved

invaluable in safeguarding Federation outposts and carrying out emergency evacuations.

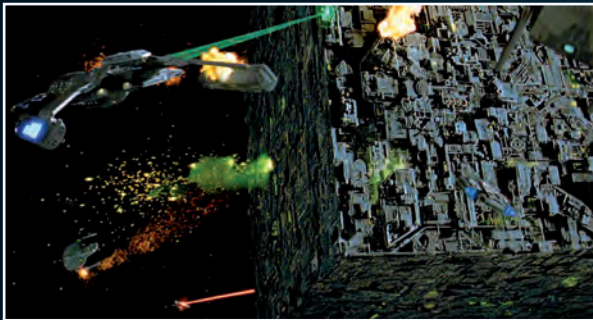
*Akira*-class vessels, including the *U.S.S. Thunderchild* NCC-63549, were also part of the fleet that engaged the Borg in the Battle of Sector 001 in 2373 and they played a significant role in several conflicts during the Dominion War.

▲ One of the sites where the *Akira* class was constructed was the Utopia Planitia Fleet Yards, a drydock facility in synchronous orbit 16,625 kilometres above the Utopia Planitia region on Mars.



## DATA FEED

In 2378, an emergency defensive force of 27 vessels, including several *Akira*-class ships, was hastily assembled to intercept the Borg when a transwarp conduit was detected opening less than a light year from Earth. As it turned out, the Borg *Sphere* that emerged from the conduit was destroyed from within by the *U.S.S. Voyager* NCC-74656 and the fleet merely had to escort her home.

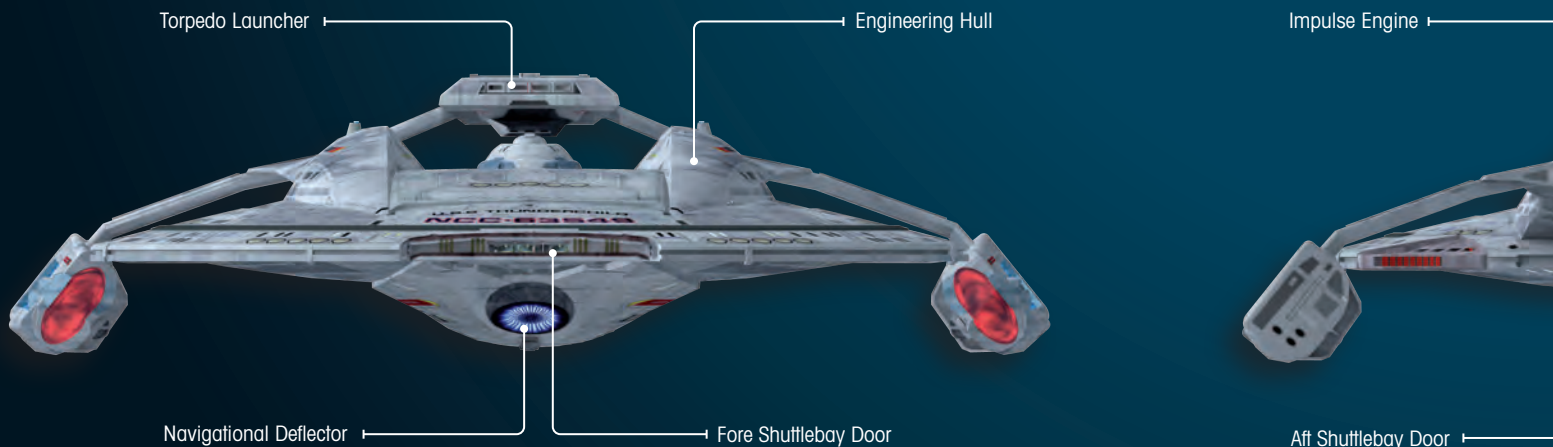
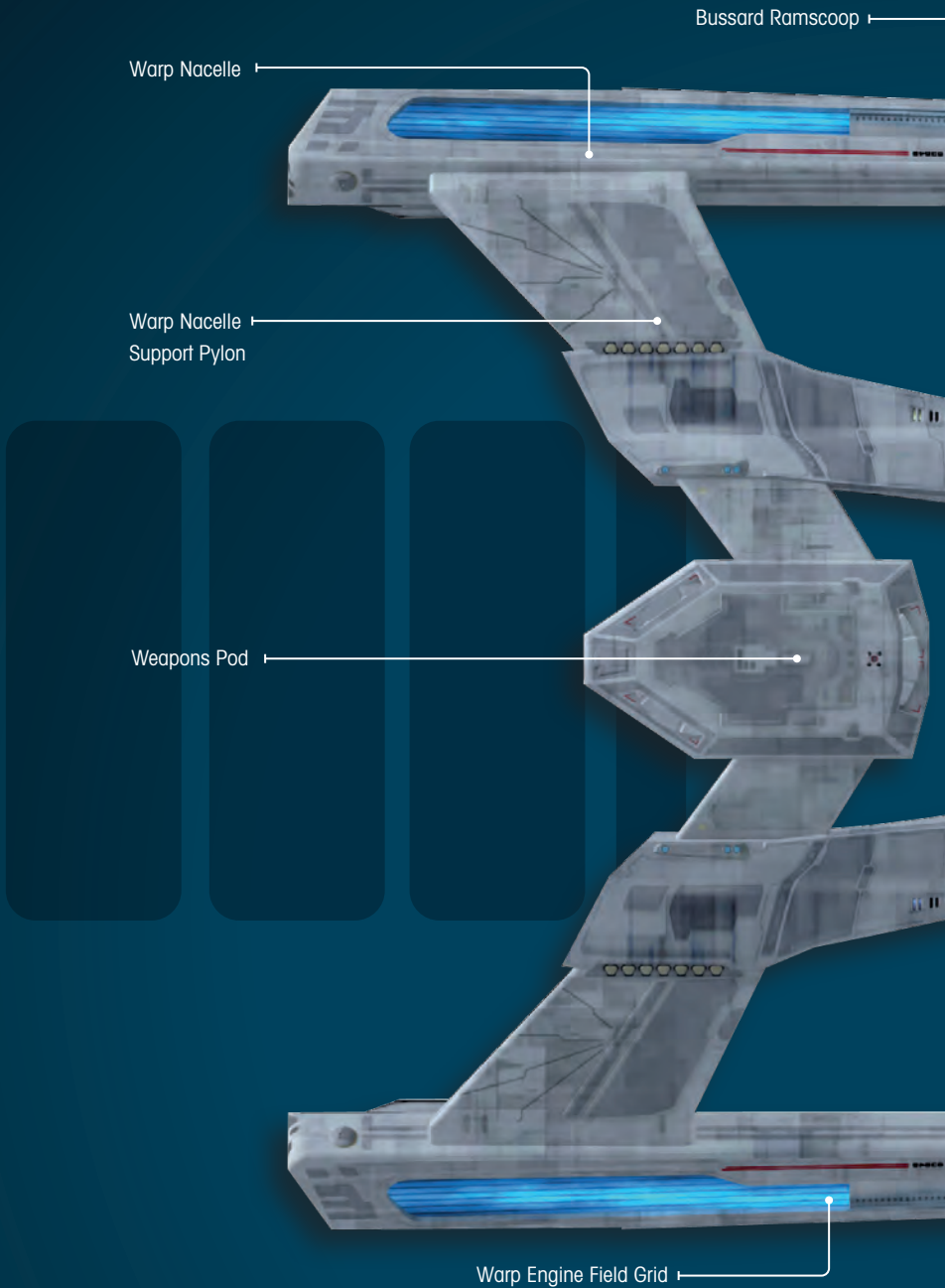


**AKIRA CLASS IN ACTION**

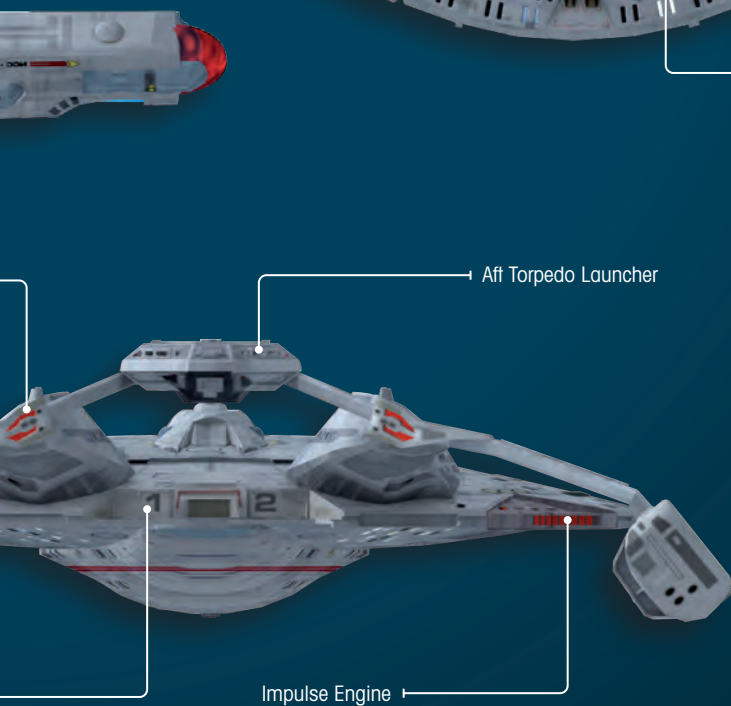
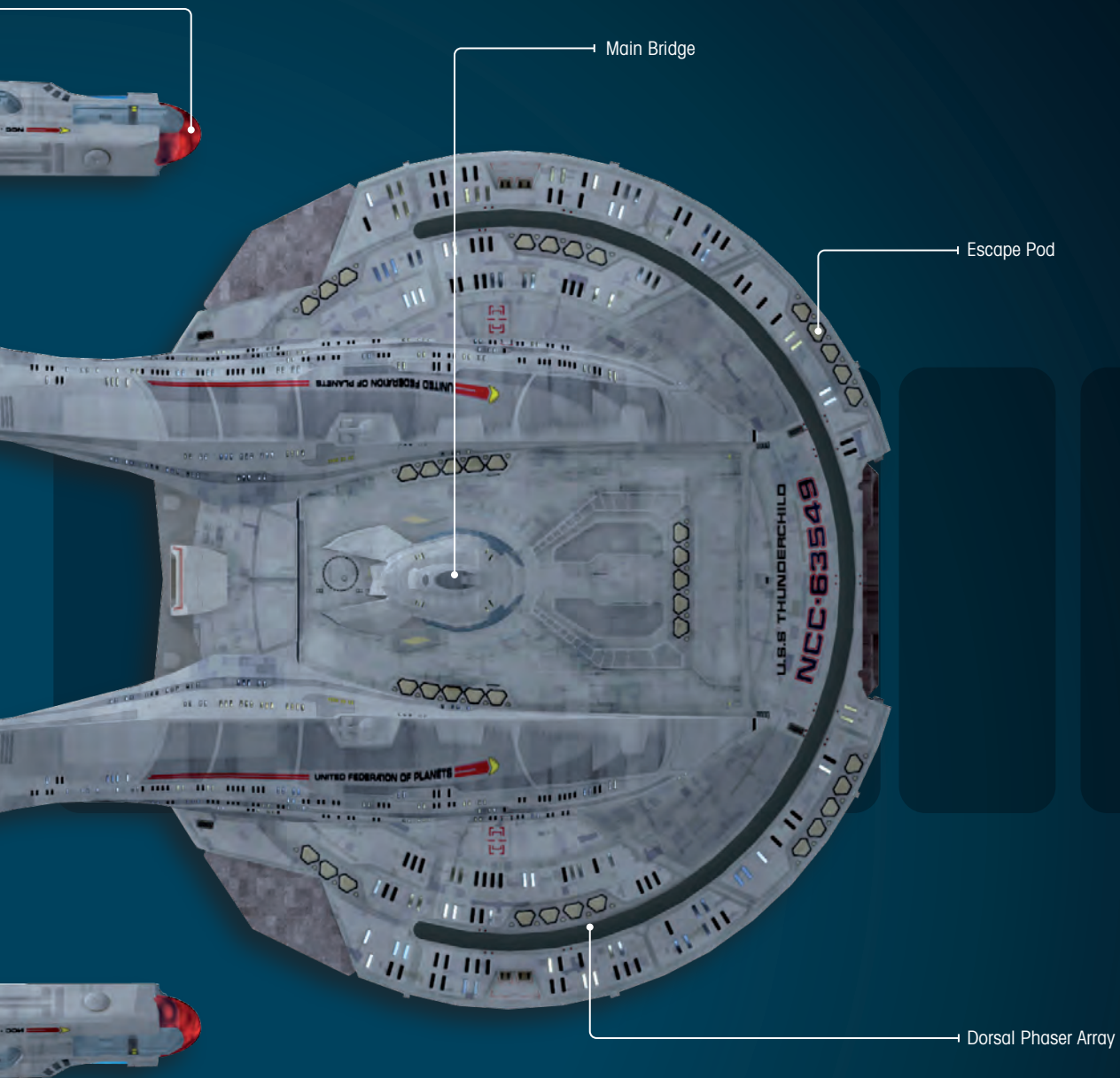
As a ship designed primarily for patrol and combat duties, the *Akira* class saw more than its fair share of action in the latter half of the 24th century. In 2373, several *Akira*-class ships, including the *U.S.S. Thunderchild* NCC-63549, were part of the Starfleet task force that fought the Borg at the Battle of Sector 001. Although at least two *Akira*-class vessels were destroyed during this engagement, the fleet managed to coordinate a successful attack on the cube by targeting a vulnerable area of the ship based on Captain Picard's inside knowledge of the Borg.



▲ An *Akira*-class ship launches a volley of torpedoes at the Borg cube during the Battle of Sector 001. The *Akira* class's combat capabilities proved a major asset for Starfleet in the late 24th century.







#### JAPANESE NAME

The *Akira* class was named after the cult Japanese anime film 'Akira' (1988). Set in the future, this animated cyberpunk film features biker gangs and characters with psychic abilities.

#### TECHNICAL DATA

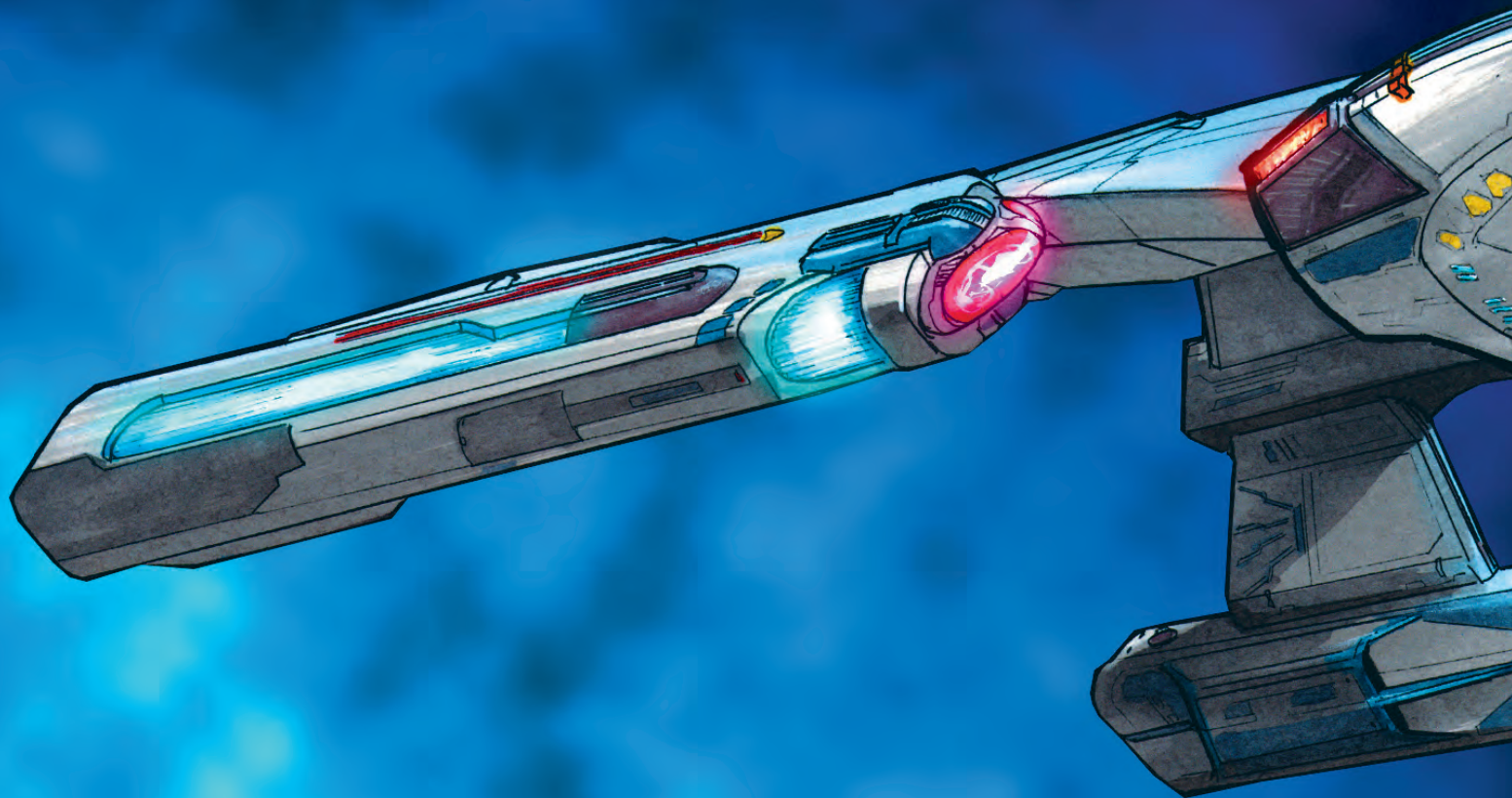
According to the 'STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE Technical Manual,' the production base for the *Akira* class was the Antares Fleet Yards. It also stated that the ship had a crew of 500.

#### DESIGN CONTINUITY

The producers wanted to use the 24th century *Akira* class as the basis of the design for the 22nd century *Enterprise* NX-01 because the basic shape seemed to be simpler than the familiar two-hulled approach.

#### DATA FEED

Alex Jaeger, the designer of the *Akira* class, has said that the escape pods on it were the same as those used on the *Sovereign* class, but that the panel details were much more similar to those on the *Galaxy* class. This was because he imagined that the *Akira* class was commissioned between the launch of those two ships.



DESIGNING THE



# AKIRA class

The need for new Starfleet vessels to battle the Borg led to the creation of the *Akira* class, a design that became a firm favourite with fans.

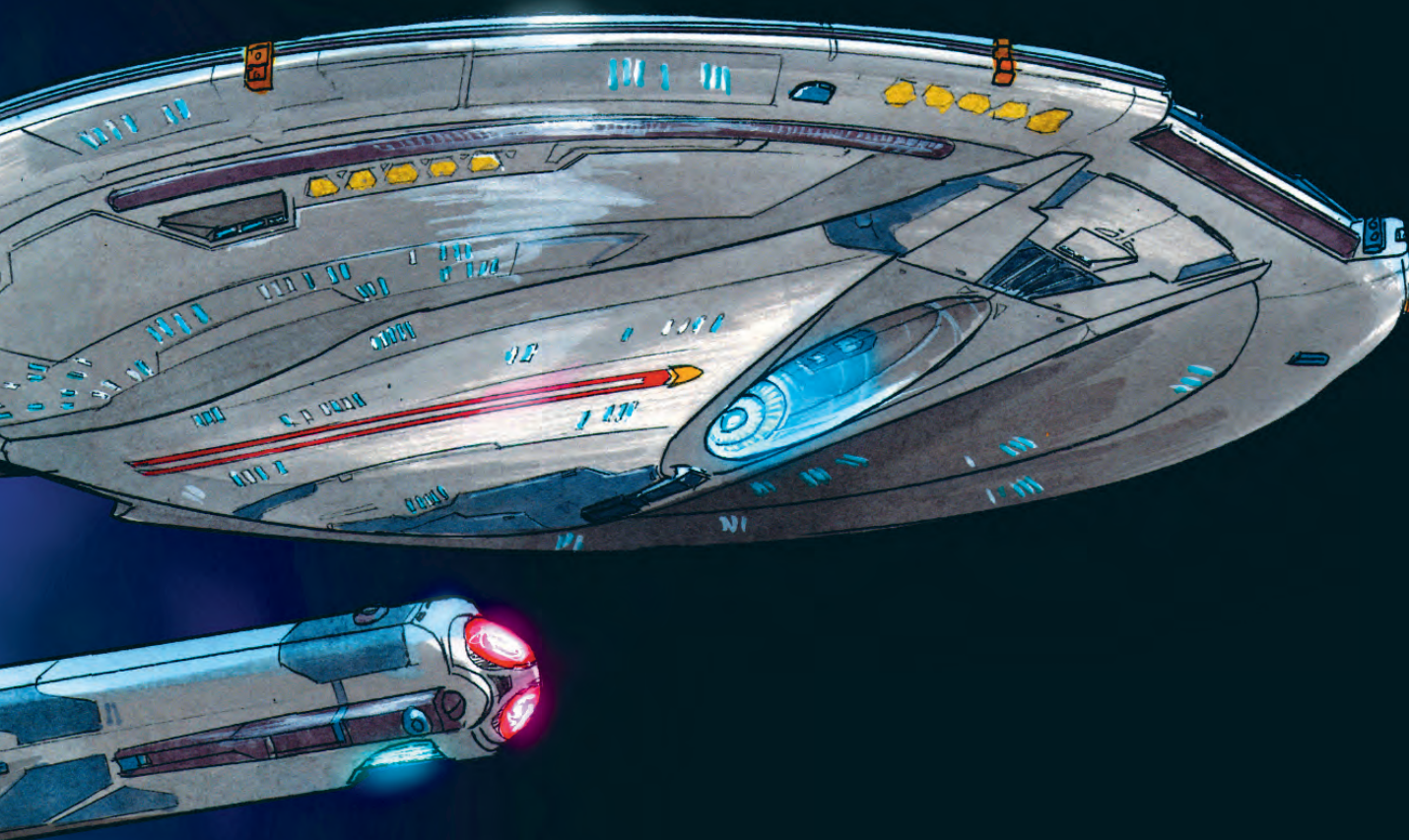
In previous *STAR TREK* films, the range of Starfleet ships seen on screen had been limited to just a few classes, but for *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT* the filmmakers wanted to treat fans to some brand new designs. The spectacular opening sequence involving the Borg at the Battle of Sector 001 provided the perfect opportunity to showcase some fresh new designs of starship.

According to writer Ronald D. Moore,

this opening battle with the Borg was originally envisaged as being much larger and longer than the version that wound up in the final cut. In one of the early versions of the script for the movie, the battle was described as “involving dozens of Starfleet and Borg vessels, engaged in a fierce firefight as far as the eye can see. Ships turning, twisting, firing, exploding. Lots of movement. It’s a spectacular sight.”



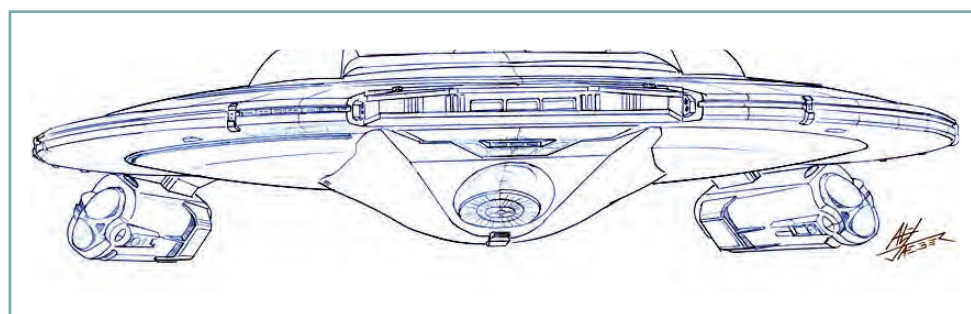
▲ Visual arts director Alex Jaeger, pictured here with a small model of the *AKIRA*-class ship he designed.



▲ The *Akira* class was created especially for the opening battle scenes with the Borg in *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT*.



► Alex Jaeger initially came up with about 18 different designs of Starfleet starship for the Battle of Sector 001. His design for the *Akira* class quickly became a favourite with both himself and the producers, so he provided several more detailed blueprint-style drawings of the ship.



In order to turn this description into a reality, executives at Paramount instructed that they should avoid reusing ships that had been seen many times before and invent some new ones.

### NEED FOR NEW DESIGNS

As *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT*'s visual effects supervisor John Knoll said, "I didn't look forward to trying to do the space battle with these same four ships we've already seen a hundred times. Starfleet would probably throw everything it could at the Borg, including ships we've never seen

before. And since we figured a lot of background action in the space battle would be built from scratch anyway, I realized that there was no reason not to do some new designs."

The then 22-year-old visual arts director Alex Jaeger was the man tasked with envisioning some new Starfleet ship designs. His only instructions were that they obeyed the existing aesthetic of *STAR TREK* and that their silhouette should look significantly different from the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-E, so that in the melee of battle they would not be confused with

the new *Enterprise*, which was making its debut in the film.

"Initially, they wanted a dozen new starships, so I did about 18 designs," said Jaeger. "But once they realized what it would cost to build and texture all of these different CG models, they whittled it down to four ships really fast."

Among these designs, a clear favourite established itself early on, and this was the *Akira* class. It featured a traditional saucer section and nacelles, but had a catamaran-style double hull rather than a separate engineering section. These features meant it would

be easily distinguishable from the *Enterprise-E* on screen.

The inspiration for the design came from the *Miranda* class and the Klingon *Bird-of-Prey*, as Jaeger explained. "I loved the stance of the *Bird-of-Prey*, so that was my main influence, to make a ship with an aggressive stance. It also has some of the feel of the old *U.S.S. Reliant* and its 'roll bar' effect, but with the catamaran style of the split hull."

Jaeger was careful to make sure that the *Akira* class fitted into the design

language of Starfleet, but just as the new *Enterprise-E* had evolved a more warship kind of look compared to its predecessor, the *Akira* too reflected the heightened military feel of the film.

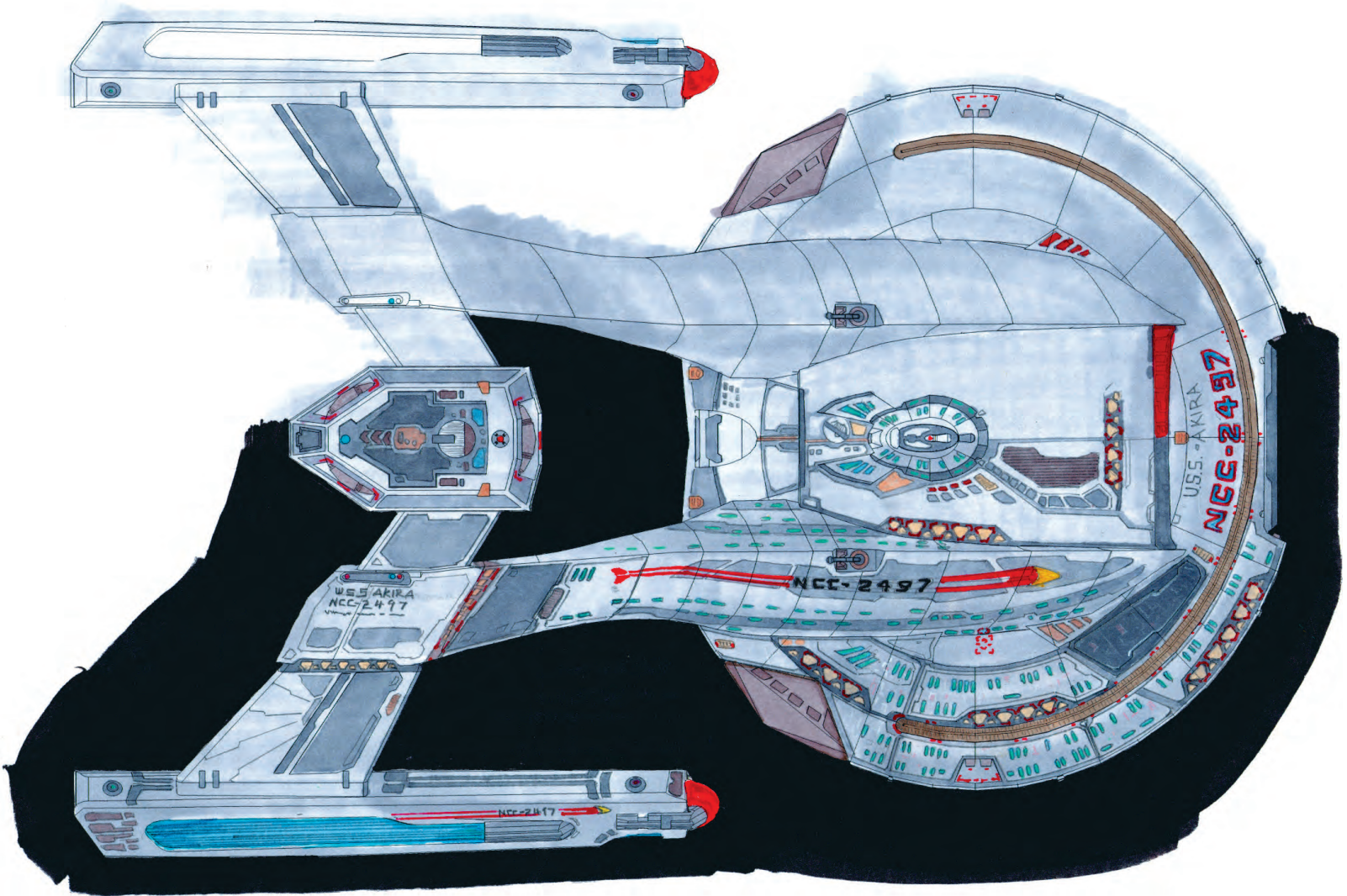
"When I was designing the *Akira*," said Jaeger, "I was in military mode, and since it was only going to show up in Earth's defence for the film, I loaded it up with lots of defensive and offensive weapons."

These included 17 torpedo launchers, 12 on the weapons pod 'roll bar', one

under the deflector dish and, unusually, four on the saucer firing sideways, two on each side.

#### AIRCRAFT CARRIER

Despite all the weaponry, Jaeger saw the *Akira* class as more akin to an aircraft carrier than an out-and-out warship. "I wanted to make a carrier of sorts... with fly-through shuttle hangers," said Jaeger. He designed it so that there were two shuttle bays - one in the front, with three doors located in the notch at



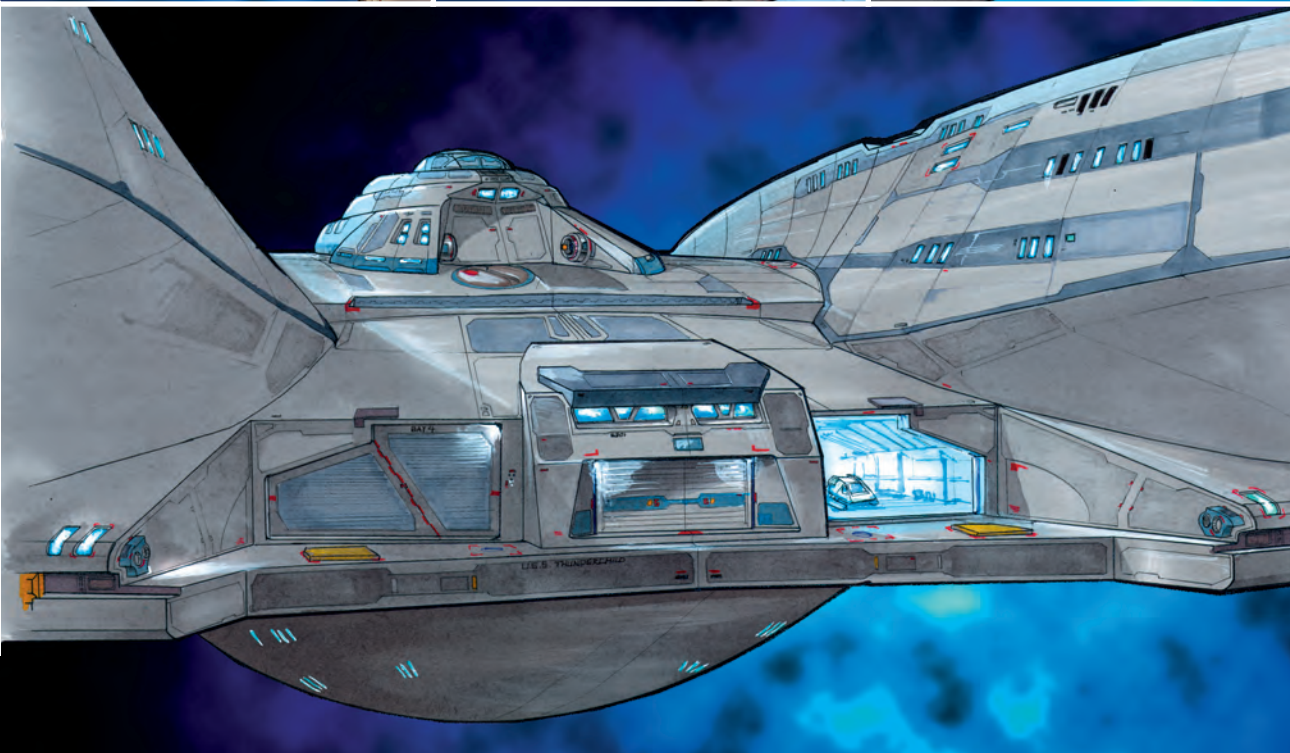
▲ Alex Jaeger has said that his design for the *Akira* class was influenced by the aggressive stance of the Klingon *Bird-of-Prey*, while the weapons 'roll bar' located behind the saucer section between the nacelles was inspired by the *Miranda* class. This illustration, drawn early on in the design process shows that these key elements were already in place.



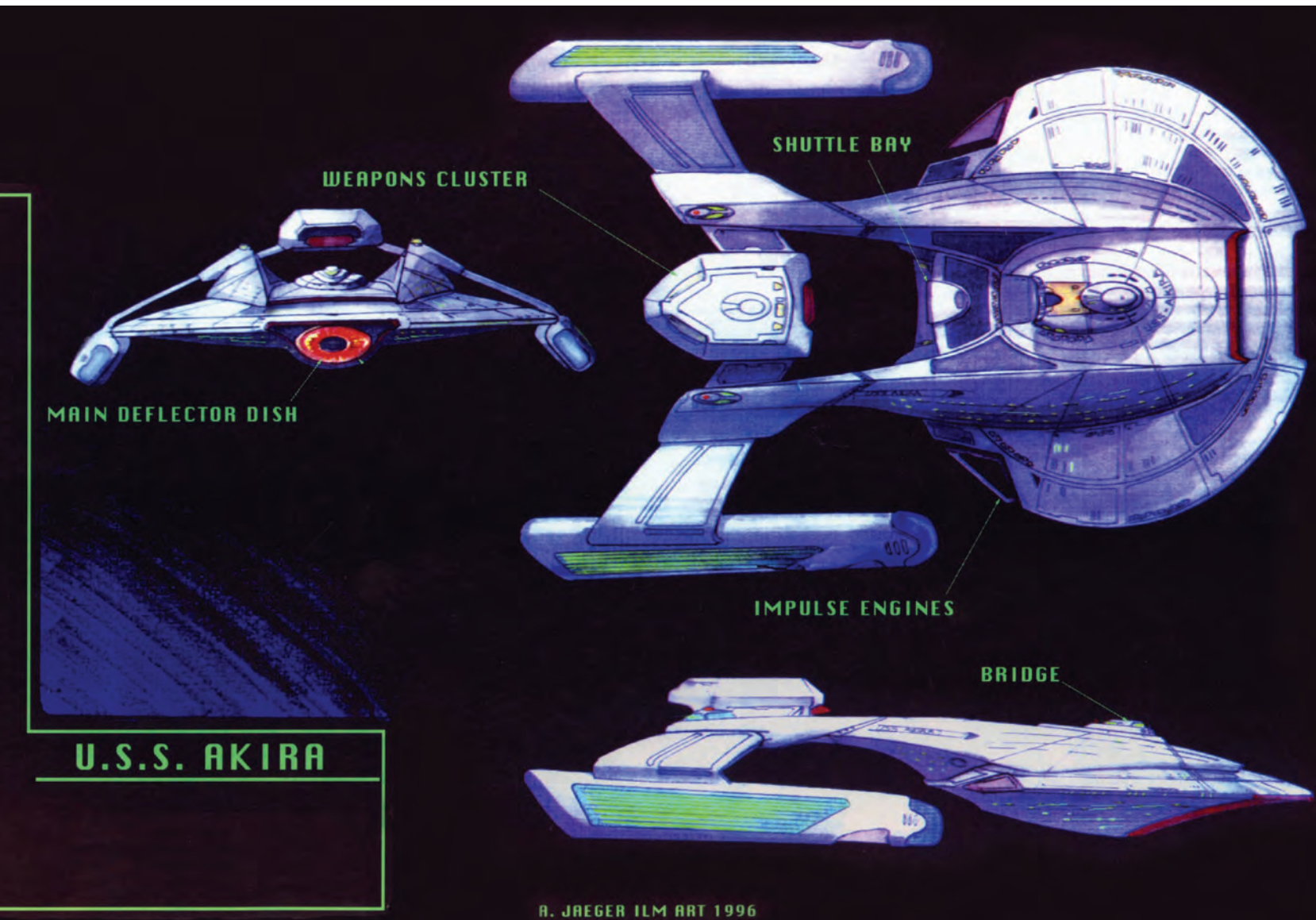
◀ Various detailed sections of the *Akira* class were illustrated by Jaeger. This drawing shows how the main bridge was nestled down between the catamaran-style hull and further protected by shield generators that were located in notches on either side on top of the catamaran hull. The illustration also shows a good view of the weapons pod, with the seven openings for the forward torpedo launchers.



◀ The inset pictures show various details at the rear of the ship, including a rear view of the weapons pod with three of its launchers, plus different perspectives of the rear shuttle bays.



◀ This rear view close-up of the *Akira* class shows the main shuttle bay and shuttle control centre. Jaeger envisioned the *Akira* class as being like a starship version of an aircraft carrier where shuttles could come in to land in this well-protected area in the rear. They would be launched from the notch at the front of the saucer section, enabling the swift exit and entry of small craft into battle.



▲ These illustrations show Jaeger's final design of the *Akira* class from several different views. The side view shows that the *Akira* class has a much narrower side profile compared to previous Starfleet ships. Jaeger also said that he felt this made for a more friendly crew environment as the engineering personnel were no longer stuck in the 'bowels' of the ship and that the split catamaran hull allowed for more windows, giving the crew a better view of their own ship.

the front of the saucer for the fast exit of small craft into battle, plus a shuttle bay at the back of the saucer where the auxiliary craft would land when they returned to the ship.

### SHUTTLE PROTECTION

This rear area also provided plenty of protection for the shuttles in a firefight as it was tucked down between the hulls and flanked by the nacelles. "I really got into it with this one," said Jaeger, "with the whole idea that the front bay would be the launching bay, and then

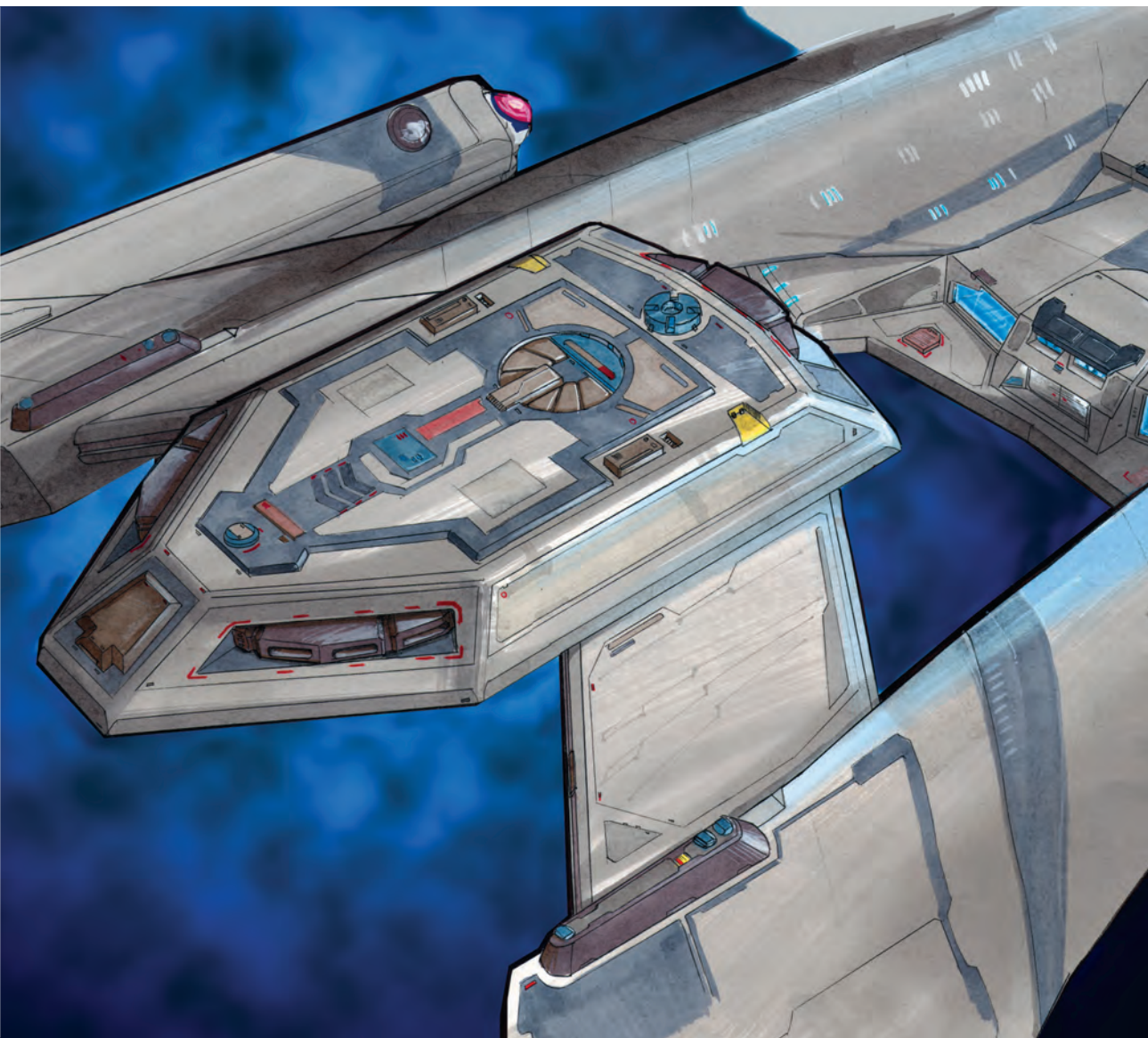
to return the shuttles would come into the back, because they'd be protected by the rest of the ship."

The bridge, unlike that on most other Starfleet ships, was also well protected as it was nestled down between the split hulls, while extra shield generators were located in a notch on either side of the bridge. Also in this protected centre region were most of the sensor arrays for the transporters and communications.

"There was considerable thought put into the placement of elements," said Jaeger. "Since we were going to flesh

out one of these background ships for a close-up, I knew it would be scrutinized... and it has been!"

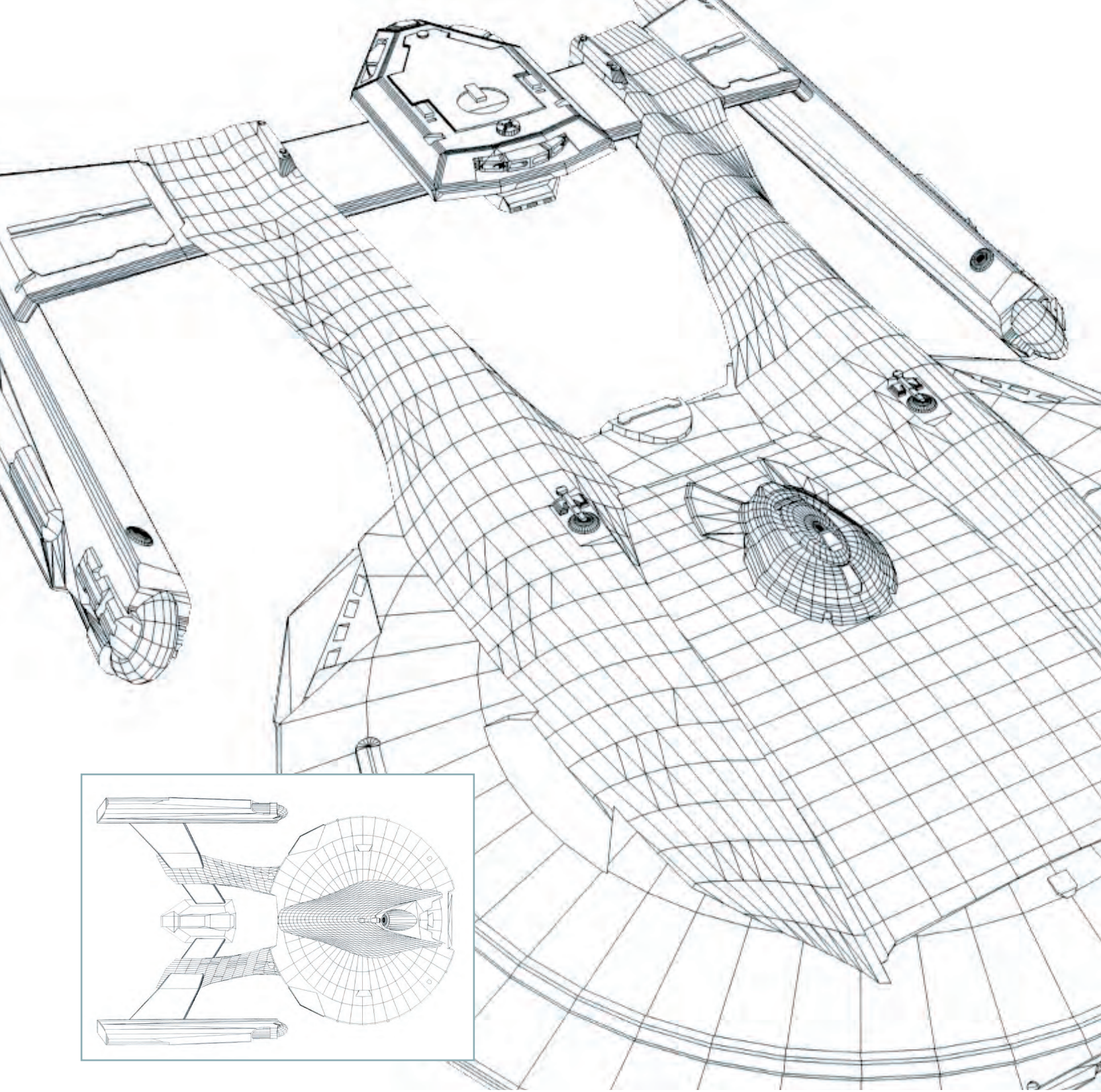
Despite appearing only relatively briefly in *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT*, the *Akira* class drew plenty of attention from fans, many of whom consider it to be one of the best-looking ships in the *STAR TREK* canon. In fact, such was its positive reception that it became the inspiration for the look of the *Enterprise* NX-01 when a new *STAR TREK* TV series was launched, and a testament to the design skills of Alex Jaeger.



◀ This wider view of the rear of the ship shows how the rear shuttle bays were protected by the twin hulls and the weapons pod that was positioned above them. Jaeger said that the weapons pod was inspired by the 'roll bar' that featured on the earlier Miranda class.



◀ Jaeger's design for the Akira class was quickly approved by the producers of *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT* and his illustrations were passed on to CGI modelers Larry Tan and Paul Theren at Industrial Light & Magic. Their computer-generated images of the Akira class show just how closely they followed Jaeger's original design. No physical studio models of the Akira class were ever constructed.



CREATING THE CGI



# AKIRA Class



## Creating the *Akira* class as a CGI model allowed it to feature in elaborate battle sequences alongside numerous other ships.

No physical studio models of the *Akira* class were ever produced for onscreen use, it being one of the first Starfleet ships to be created entirely digitally for the massive opening battle sequence in *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT*.

The high number of ships involved in the Battle of Sector 001, in which the *Akira* class featured, meant that CG had to be used since employing traditional stop-motion photography with physical models would have taken far too long and cost far too much. The fact that CG models were used also meant that the ships in the space battle sequences could be depicted performing much faster and more elaborate manoeuvres than had previously been possible in *STAR TREK*.

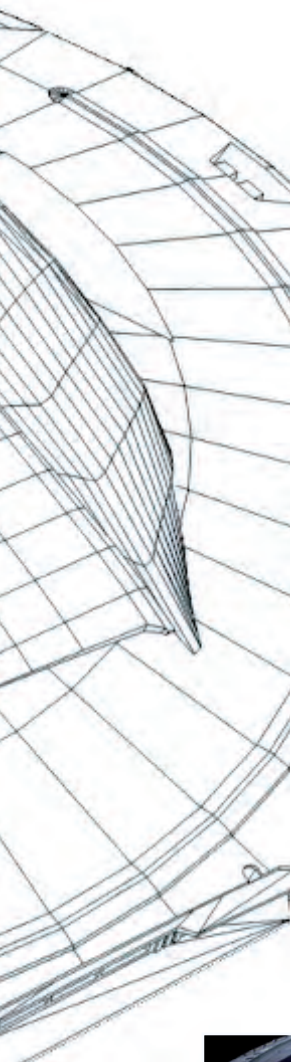
After Alex Jaeger's design for the *Akira* class had been approved by the producers of *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT*, he produced blueprints of the ship so that a CG version could be created. This task fell to CG modelers Larry Tan and Paul Theren at Industrial Light & Magic, who used Electric Image software for animation and form•Z software for the model.

Larry Tan had previously worked in the traditional craft of building physical studio models and been involved with *STAR TREK* since the early 1980s, when he contributed to the building of the model of the *U.S.S. Reliant* NCC-1864 for *STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN*.

Tan subsequently worked on the next five *STAR TREK* feature films before making the move to CG model building. Tan and Paul Theren began the process of creating the *Akira* class by producing three-dimensional wire frame models of the ship to establish the vessel's basic outline before it was then textured and coloured in the computer.

Later, the effects house Digital Muse created scenes featuring huge fleets of ships for episodes of *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*. One of the ships involved was the *Akira* class, but due to software differences, they were unable to use the earlier model and had to largely recreate it using LightWave software, and took the opportunity to remap it at a higher resolution. This version was then used in 10 episodes of *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*, beginning with 'Call to Arms' where it featured with several other ships that were produced in CG, alongside several more classes that were depicted using physical models. The *Akira* class also featured in several episodes of *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*, including 'Message In A Bottle' and 'Endgame'.

The digital model of the *Akira* class was further refined by Adam 'Mojo' Lebowitz, who worked as a computer graphics animation supervisor on *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*, and Robert Bonchune, a digital effects supervisor on both *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE* and *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*, for their reference book, '*STAR TREK: Starship Spotter*'.



▲ CG artists Rob Bonchune and Adam 'Mojo' Lebowitz created an enhanced CG version of the *Akira* class which is used in this publication.



▲ Producing the *Akira* class as a CG model meant it could be shown in spectacular scenes, such as escaping the blast of the Borg cube.

# ON SCREEN



## TRIVIA

Although several *Akira*-class vessels have appeared on screen, the names of these ships are not written on the top of their saucer sections. One *Akira*-class ship that appeared in *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT* had the clearly visible registry of NCC-63549, and according to production sources this was the *U.S.S. Thunderchild*.



The *U.S.S. Thunderchild* was named after the warship that featured in H.G. Wells's novel 'The War of the Worlds'. In the book, the HMS Thunder Child was a steam-propelled warship that drew away Martian fire to allow civilians to escape.

<b>FIRST APPEARANCE:</b>	<i>STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT</i>
<b>TV APPEARANCES:</b>	<i>STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE</i> ; <i>STAR TREK: VOYAGER</i>
<b>DESIGNED BY:</b>	Alex Jaeger

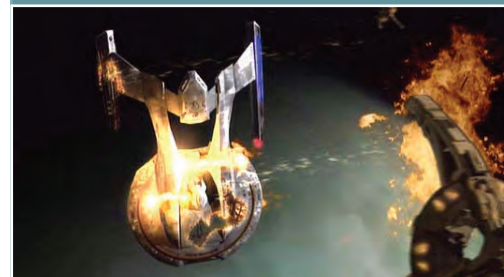
## KEY APPEARANCES

### STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE 'SACRIFICE OF ANGELS'

With the Dominion just hours away from disabling the minefield around the Bajoran wormhole that is preventing their reinforcements from entering the Alpha Quadrant, Starfleet launch a massive operation to retake *Deep Space Nine*. As the battle ensues and casualties mount, the Dominion deactivate the minefield and victory appears to be theirs. All that stands in their way is the *U.S.S. Defiant* NX-74205 and a prayer from Captain Sisko to the Prophets.

### STAR TREK: VOYAGER 'MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE'

The holographic Doctor of the *U.S.S. Voyager* NCC-74656 is sent to a Starfleet ship in the Alpha Quadrant via an alien relay network. Upon arrival, the Doctor finds himself aboard the *U.S.S. Prometheus* NX-74913, an experimental warship that has been hijacked by the Romulans. The Doctor not only has to contend with the Romulans, but also three Starfleet ships that have orders to destroy the *Prometheus* rather than let it fall into enemy hands.



*Akira* class ships featured prominently in several major battles during the Dominion War. As well as taking part in Operation Return in 'Sacrifice of Angels', they saw action in the First Battle of Chin'toka in the episode 'Tears of the Prophets', where at least two ships of the class were destroyed by orbital weapon platforms.

COMING NEXT

JEM'HADAR

# BATTLECRUISER

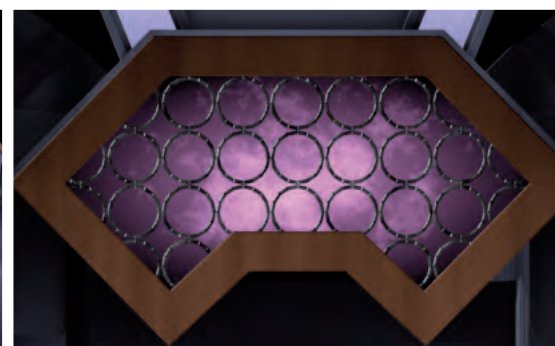


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## Inside your magazine

- In-depth profile of the *Jem'Hadar Battle Cruiser*, the powerful warships used by the Dominion's shock troops
- The story behind production illustrator John Eaves' design
- How the writers created a formidable foe in the Dominion



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# STAR TREK™

