

58

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BORG  
**TACTICAL CUBE**

TYPE: CLASS 4

LAUNCHED: 24th C

DEFENSES: HULL ARMOR

LENGTH: 3040 METERS



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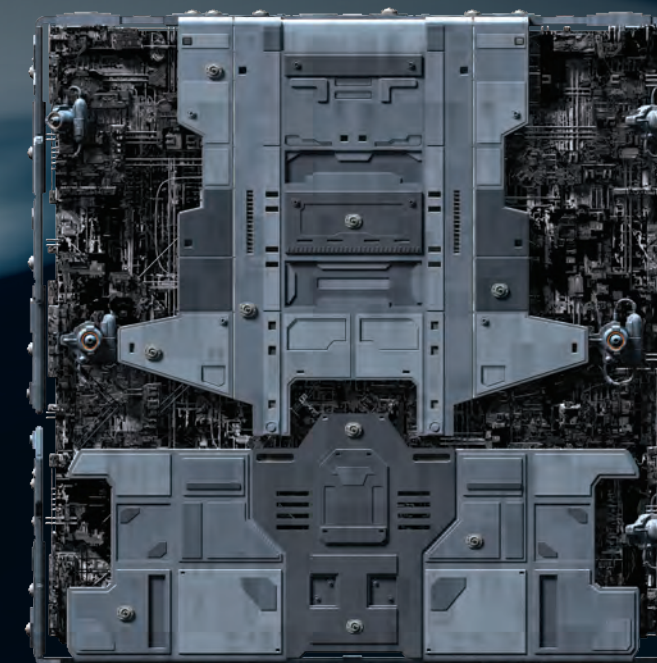
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# BORG TACTICAL CUBE SPECIFICATION



TYPE:	CLASS-4 TACTICAL CUBE
IN SERVICE:	2370s
LENGTH:	3040 METERS
CREW:	64.000 (APPROX.)
TOP SPEED:	TRANSWARP CAPABLE
WEAPONRY:	BEAM WEAPONS, PHOTONIC MISSILES
STATUS:	DESTROYED 2377







# BORG TACTICAL CUBE

The Borg tactical cube was the most powerful of all Borg vessels, and the ultimate in assimilation hardware.

As if a standard Borg cube wasn't powerful enough, in 2376 the crew of the *U.S.S. Voyager* NCC-74656 encountered an even more formidable Borg ship in the shape of a class-4 tactical cube. This type of Borg vessel possessed all the usual features of a cube plus enhanced shielding in the form of extensive armor plates that covered most of its exterior.

The fact that *Voyager* did not come across a tactical cube until 2376, some three years after it first encountered a Borg cube in the Delta Quadrant, suggested that it was added to the Borg fleet around this time. The extra defenses were perhaps developed in response to the Borg's encounters with Species 8472, whose vessels were not only able to resist attacks from Borg cubes, but were able to destroy them with relative ease.



▲ The Borg tactical cube retained the classic cube shape of most Borg vessels, but it also featured extensive armor that covered a large portion of the hull. Those areas not covered with the protective plating glowed with the familiar green Borg power signature.

## DATA FEED

All Borg drones, no matter how far apart they were in the galaxy, were joined in a hive mind, or collective consciousness, via their neural transceivers. Each Borg ship was equipped with a vinculum that interconnected the minds of all drones on board, while another device called the central plexus connected all their ships together.

The Borg tactical cube appeared to be a similar size to other Borg cubes, meaning it was vast. It had an internal volume of 28 cubic kilometers with each side measuring 3040 meters (more than three kilometers). This meant it was more like a mobile city-state than a spaceship.

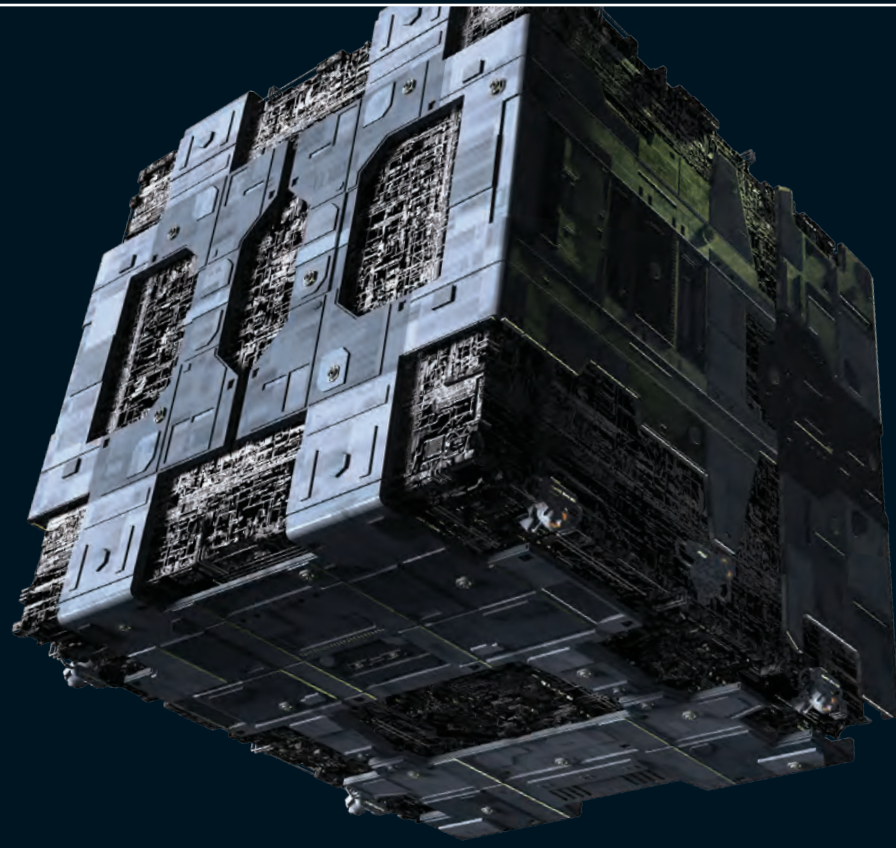
Seven of Nine described the tactical cube as being "heavily armed," indicating that it also possessed superior firepower compared to a standard Borg cube. It was certainly equipped with powerful beam and projectile weapons, while it also displayed the ability to access *Voyager's* tactical controls in order to lower the Starfleet ship's shields.

## INTERNAL CONFIGURATION

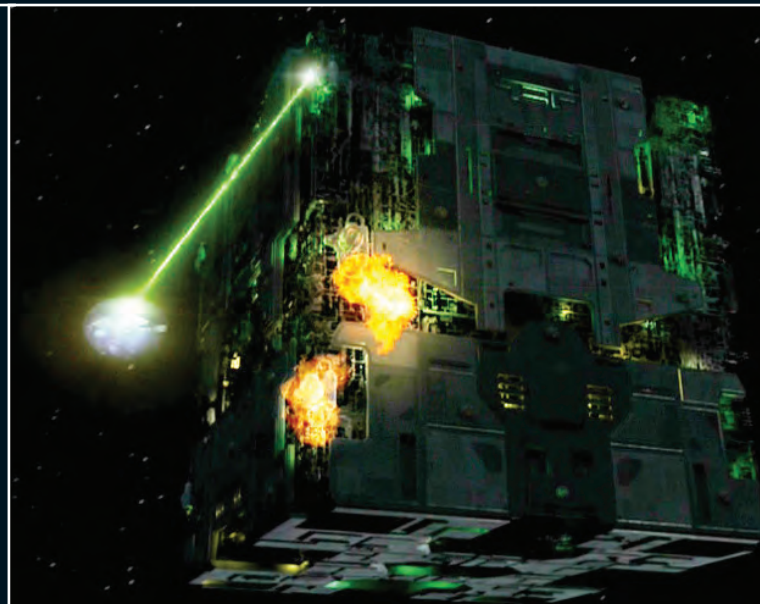
The interior of the tactical cube appeared to be similar to other Borg cubes in that it featured a generalized design with no specific command center, living quarters or engineering sections. The internal architecture did appear to differ in one significant way, however, in that its central plexus was protected by multi-regenerative security fields.

The central plexus was one of the most important components of a Borg vessel, as it was the communication device that linked the ship to all other Borg ships. This meant that the status of each Borg cube, or whatever information it assimilated,





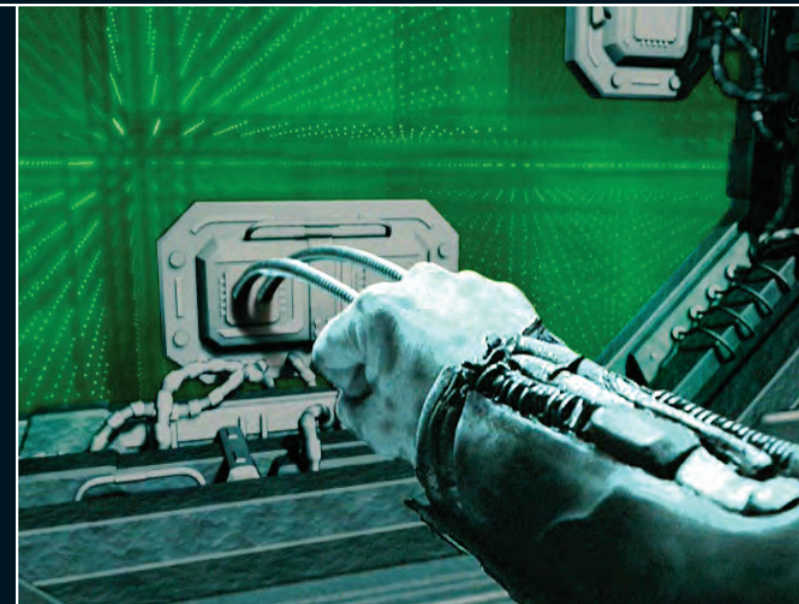
◀ Like all Borg cubes, the tactical cube was enormous, being more than three kilometers in both height and width. It made for an intimidating sight, and with good reason. It was bristling with firepower that included beam and projectile weaponry, while it also displayed the ability to hack into *Voyager's* tactical systems and lower its shields.



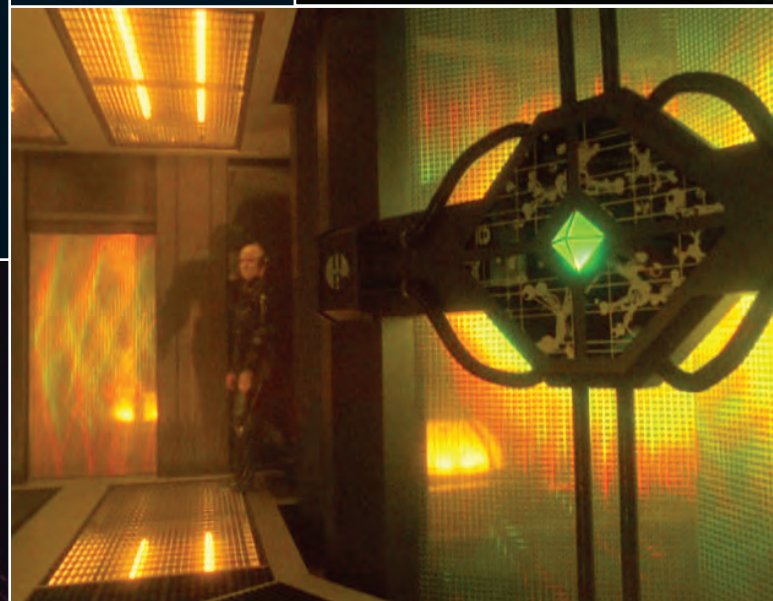
◀ *Voyager* attacked the cube and weakened its shield emitters enough for an away team to beam on board.

▶ B'Elanna Torres was able to download the nanovirus directly into the central plexus using her assimilation tubules.

▼ The Borg Queen instructed the tactical cube to self-destruct in order to stop the away team from escaping, but they were beamed back to *Voyager* with just seconds to spare.



▶ There was no way for an away team to infiltrate the tactical cube without being detected. The Doctor administered them with a neural suppressant that temporarily allowed them to retain their individuality and carry out their mission.



◀ The central plexus was located in a room deep within the tactical cube that was protected by multi-regenerative force fields. The away team could not gain access directly as it would have meant shutting down the power grid for the entire section, an act that would have alerted the Borg to their presence. Instead, they gained entry through a primary access port that was separate from the main power grid.



▲ When inside the virtual world of Unimatrix Zero, the Borg drones could choose to appear as their former selves. While inside this artificial construct, Seven of Nine formed a close friendship with Axum, and later tried to help him stop the Borg Queen from destroying Unimatrix Zero.

was instantaneously broadcast to every other Borg cube, no matter how far apart they were from each other. This was one of the Borg's greatest strengths as it allowed them to act as one, and coordinate their efforts in a way no other species was able to do.

Given the importance of the central plexus, it was afforded a high level of protection, and on a tactical cube it was located in an area surrounded by multi-regenerative security grids. These ensured that not only would it be protected from damage in an external attack, but also that any intruders would be detected long before they could reach this vital area.

Ironically, while the central plexus provided the Borg with one of their greatest strengths, it also

proved to be an area of vulnerability that the *Voyager* crew were able to exploit. When Captain Janeway learned that there were thousands of Borg drones who were living as individuals free from the Borg Collective in an artificial construct known as Unimatrix Zero, she was determined to help them.

#### INFECTING THE CUBE

A plan was formulated to infect the central plexus of a Borg tactical cube with a nanovirus that would then be instantly disseminated throughout the Collective. The nanovirus was designed to allow the members of Unimatrix Zero to retain their individuality in the real world, and in the process create a Borg resistance movement from within.

As there was no hope of an away team reaching the tactical cube's central plexus without being detected, Janeway, Torres and Tuvok allowed themselves to be partially assimilated so they could infiltrate the ship.

Once on board the tactical cube, the away team made their way to the central plexus via a primary access port that was isolated from the main power grid, and successfully downloaded the virus. By this point, *Voyager* was struggling to repel the assault by the tactical cube, but the virus had taken effect. In an effort to stop the away team from escaping, the Borg Queen ordered the tactical cube to self-destruct, but they were beamed through the cube's failing shields and back to *Voyager* just seconds before it exploded.



#### DATA FEED

Unimatrix Zero was an idyllic virtual world created by Borg drones who had a recessive genetic mutation. This allowed them to remember their former lives and visit here as individuals, while regenerating in their alcoves. When the Borg Queen learned of these renegade Borg, she tried to find a way to destroy them. One of the renegade Borg named Axum called Seven of Nine back into Unimatrix Zero in the hope she could help them save their virtual world.



**PERILOUS PLAN**

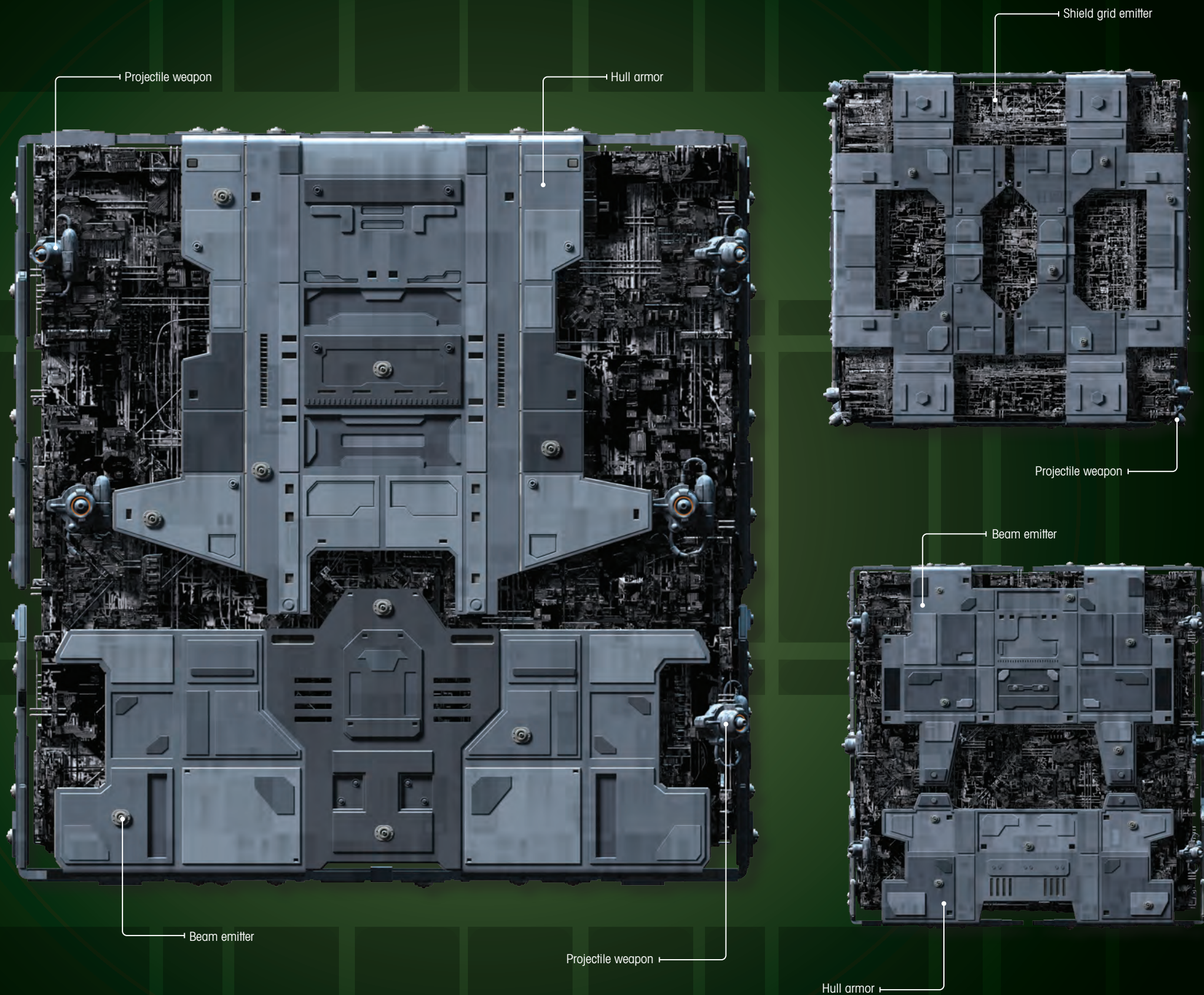
The *U.S.S. Voyager* NCC-74656 undertook one of its most dangerous missions when it engaged a Borg tactical cube in battle in order to get the partially assimilated Janeway, Tuvok and Torres aboard the Borg ship. *Voyager* concentrated its fire on the secondary emitter on the ventral axis of the cube, which eventually produced a 0.06 terrahertz fluctuation in one of its shield grids. The *Delta Flyer* was then able to fly close enough to the cube to beam the away team through the damaged shield grid. Immediately after the successful transport, the *Delta Flyer* was blown to molecules by a short barrage of Borg torpedoes, but by this time the away team were on their way to successfully deploying the nanovirus in the central plexus of the tactical cube.



▲ The *Delta Flyer* was blown to pieces by a Borg projectile fired from the tactical cube just after the away team had managed to transport across to it through a minor fluctuation in its enhanced shields.

**DATA FEED**

A Borg sphere commandeered by Korok, a former Klingon who possessed the mutated gene that allowed him to be part of Unimatrix Zero, helped save Captain Janeway, Tuvok and Torres from the tactical cube. His sphere targeted the shields of the tactical cube in sub-grid 42, causing them to destabilize enough for the away team to be beamed to safety.

**HUGELY RESILIENT**

Thanks to its highly decentralized structure, it was estimated that a Borg cube could remain functional even if 78 per cent of it was rendered inoperable.

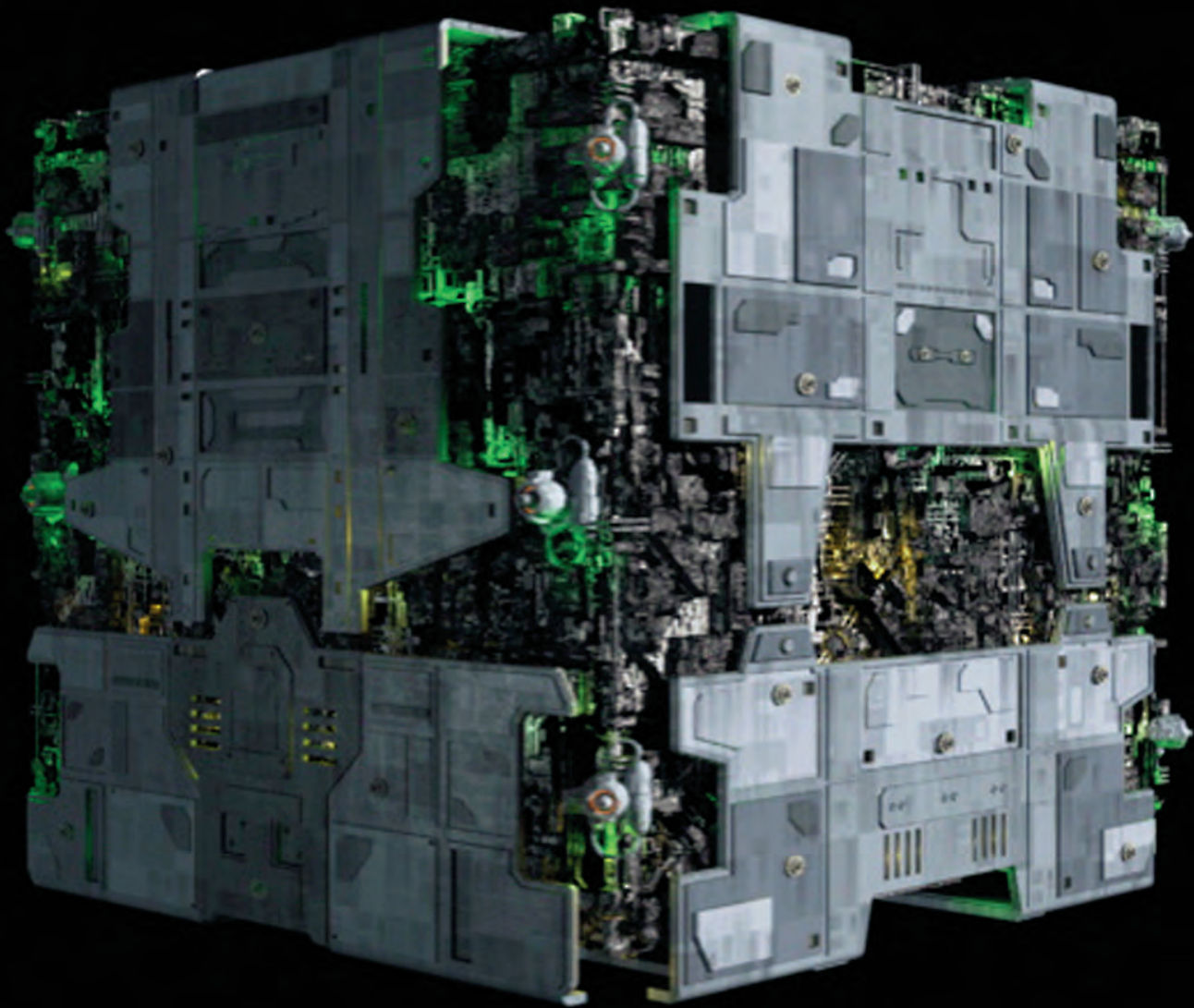
**CUBE DESIGNATIONS**

The Borg tactical cube encountered by the crew of *Voyager* was referred to as tactical cube 138 by the Borg Queen, perhaps indicating that there were at least 138 of them. Seven of Nine referred to it as a class-4 tactical cube.

**DRONE COMPLEMENT**

The number of drones aboard a Borg cube could vary widely. Some cubes had a complement of just 5,000, while others had 64,000. The Borg cube encountered by Seven of Nine's parents was said to have as many as 129,000 on board.





## DESIGNING THE BORG



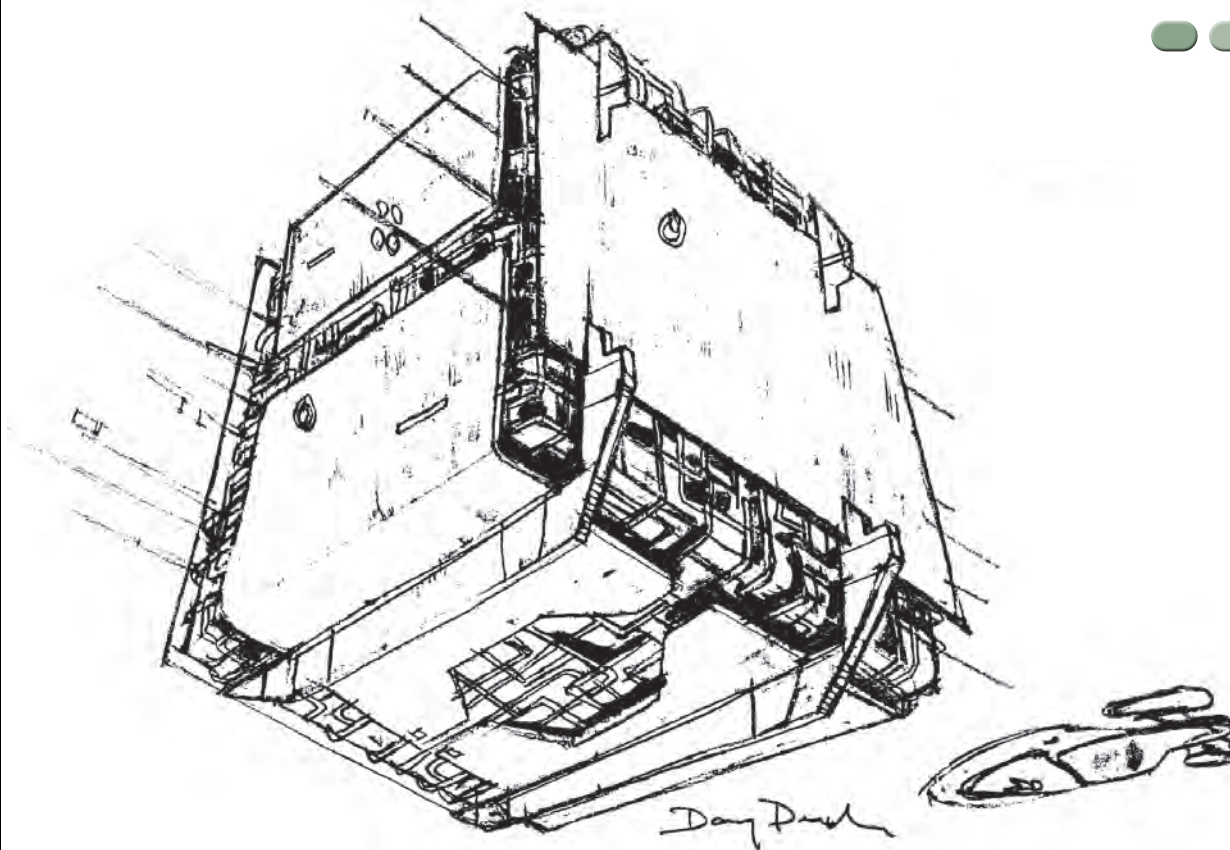
## TACTICAL CUBE

How do you make a Borg cube look tougher and more aggressive? Doug Drexler decided what it needed was a flak jacket.

When it was time to design the Borg tactical cube for 'Unimatrix Zero,' the art department had already left on hiatus between seasons, so the job was given to visual effects house Foundation

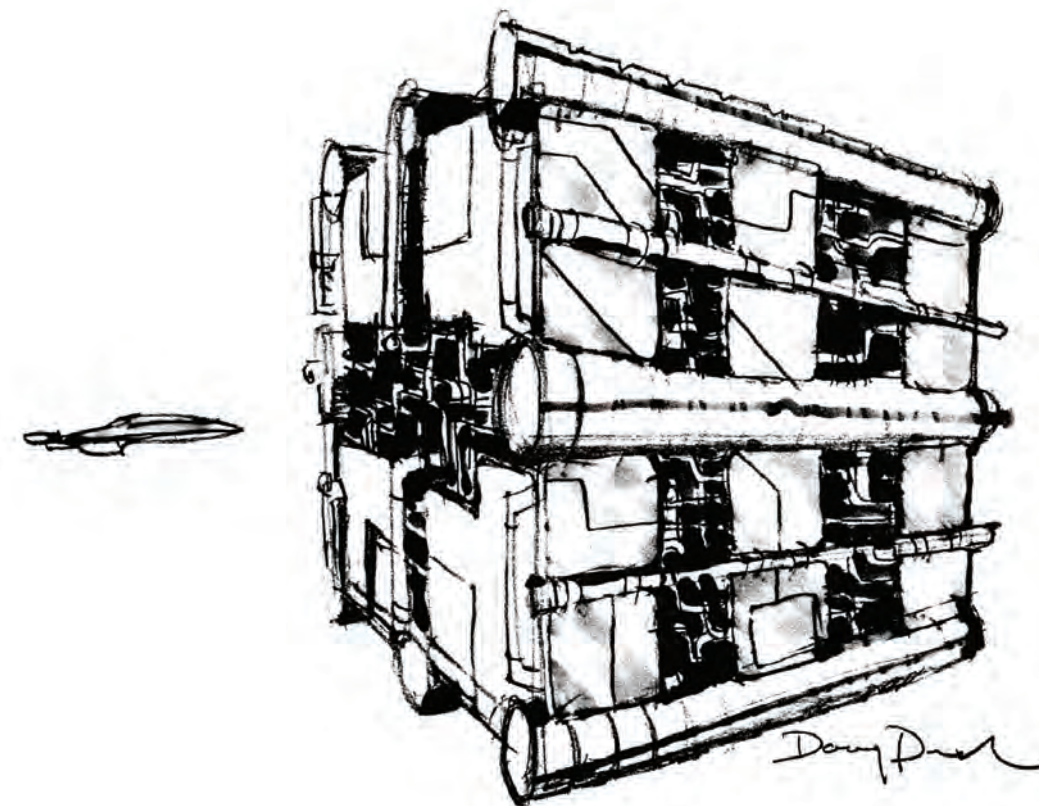
Imaging. Fortunately, their staff included Doug Drexler, who had spent several years in the art department of *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE* after a spell in the makeup department of *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*.

"I was the only guy on the *STAR TREK: VOYAGER* team at Foundation who was a sketcher," said Drexler. "If Rick (Sternbach) was too busy, or the art department had left for hiatus, Rob (Bonchune) or Mojo (Lebowitz)



Once Drexler had the brief, he produced a dozen or so rough sketches showing some possible directions for the design. Drexler felt that the original design was so iconic and represented the Borg so well that he did not want to add anything too radical or that would give it too much personality. Instead, he decided the best way to make it look more threatening was to add armor.

The final CG version of the Borg tactical cube was built at special effects house Foundation Imaging by Koji Kuramura. He used the texture maps of the standard Borg cube as a basis and then added the parts that Doug Drexler had illustrated in his designs for the tactical cube. Only three sides of the CG cube were built, as this was all that could be seen on screen.



(*STAR TREK: VOYAGER* effects supervisors at Foundation Imaging) would ask me to bash out ideas. This was the case when I worked in the *DEEP SPACE NINE* art department as well. If John Eaves was busy I would

pinch-hit. I enjoyed designing, but I think that I wouldn't have wanted to be the lead illustrator. It was a tough job. This way I got to dabble.

"When Rob told me that they wanted a new type of Borg cube,

I was kind of amused," continued Drexler, "After all, a cube is a cube, right?"

With this difficult brief in mind, Drexler sat down and worked up several rough sketches. He said experience had



taught him that this was the best way to work. "I liked to give the producers a bunch of sketched concepts to look at rather than work one idea into an illustrative masterpiece," said Drexler. "It would have been a misdirection of energy. If the idea didn't sell as a sketch, the concept probably wasn't strong enough."

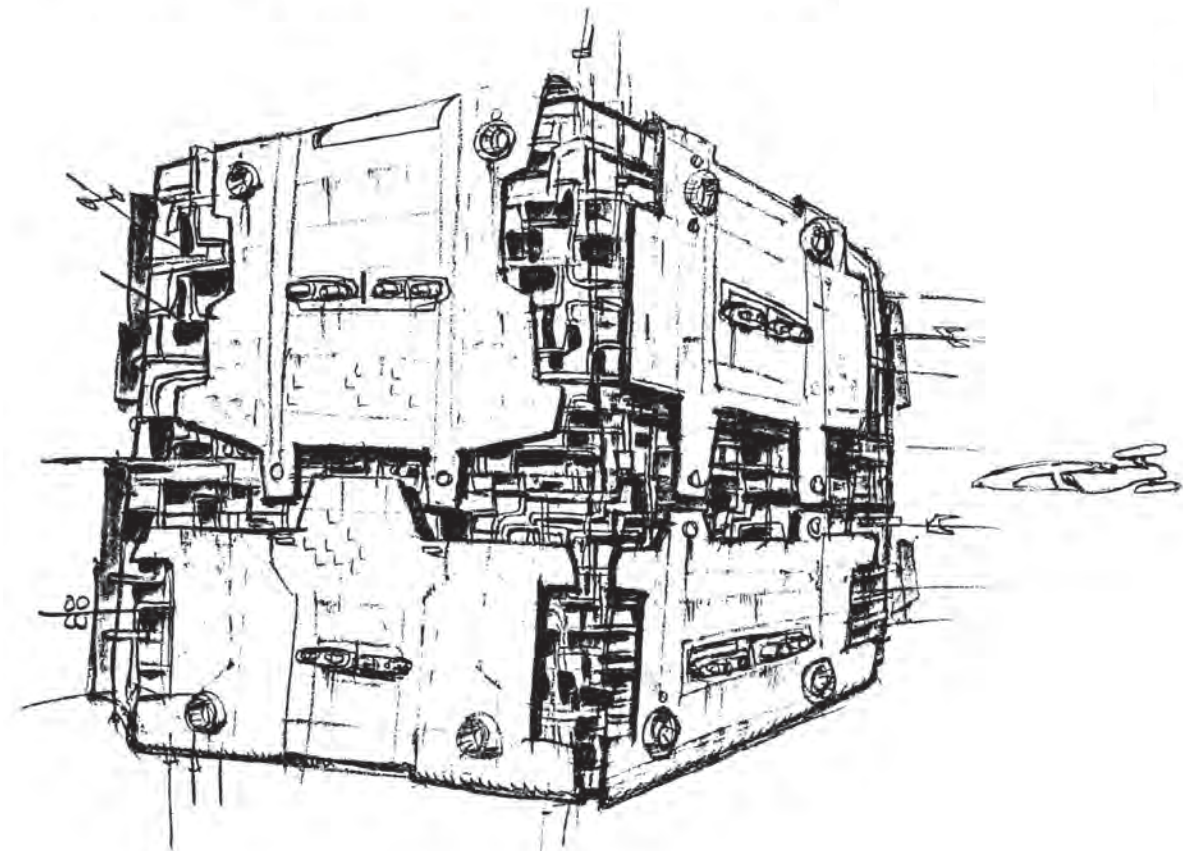
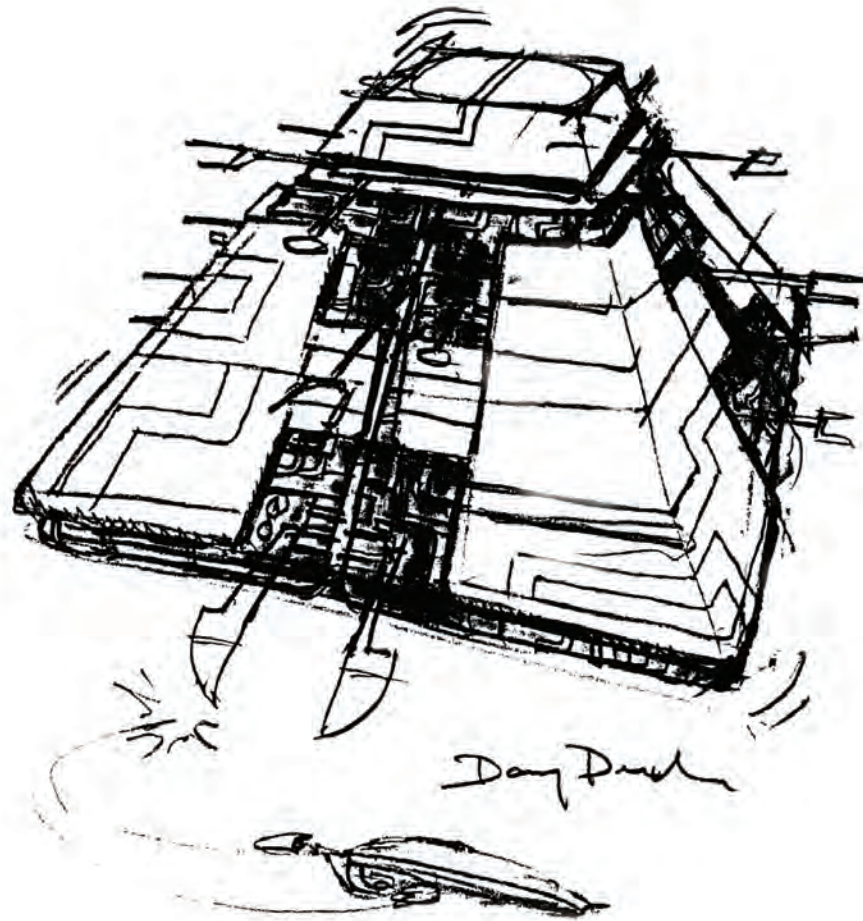
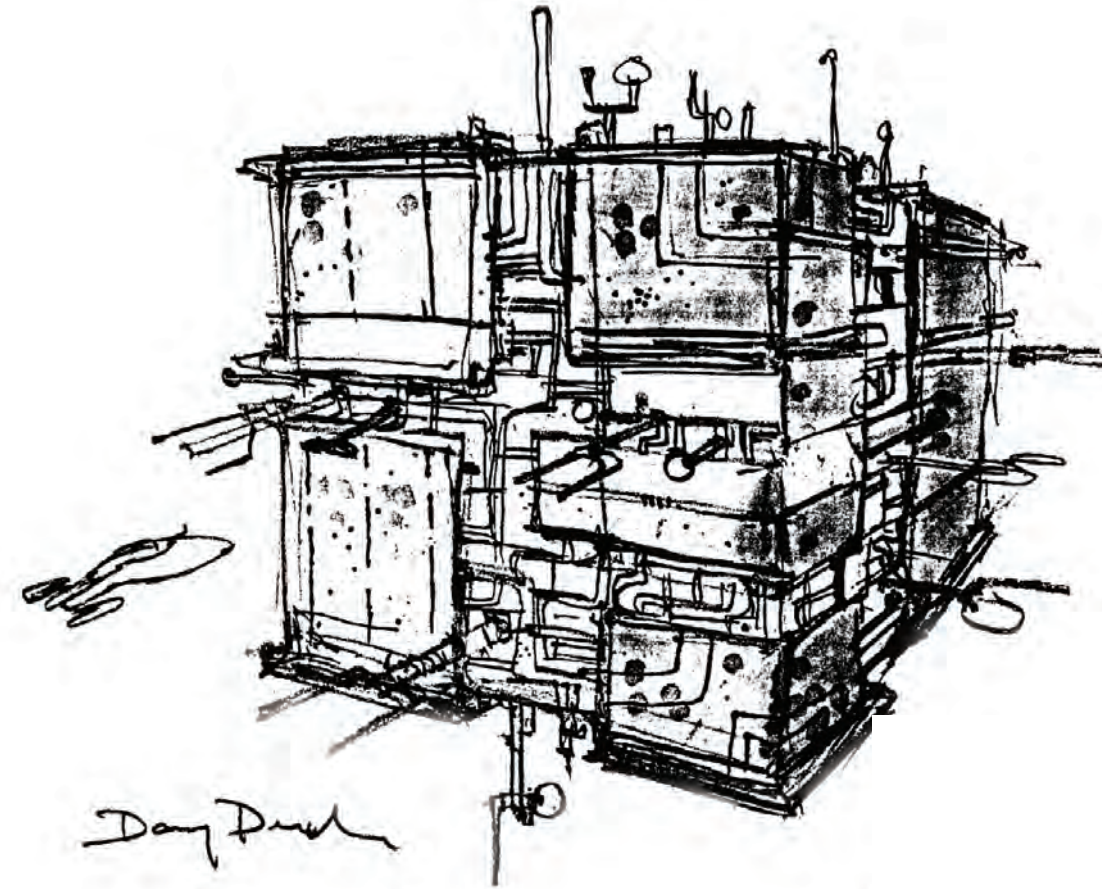
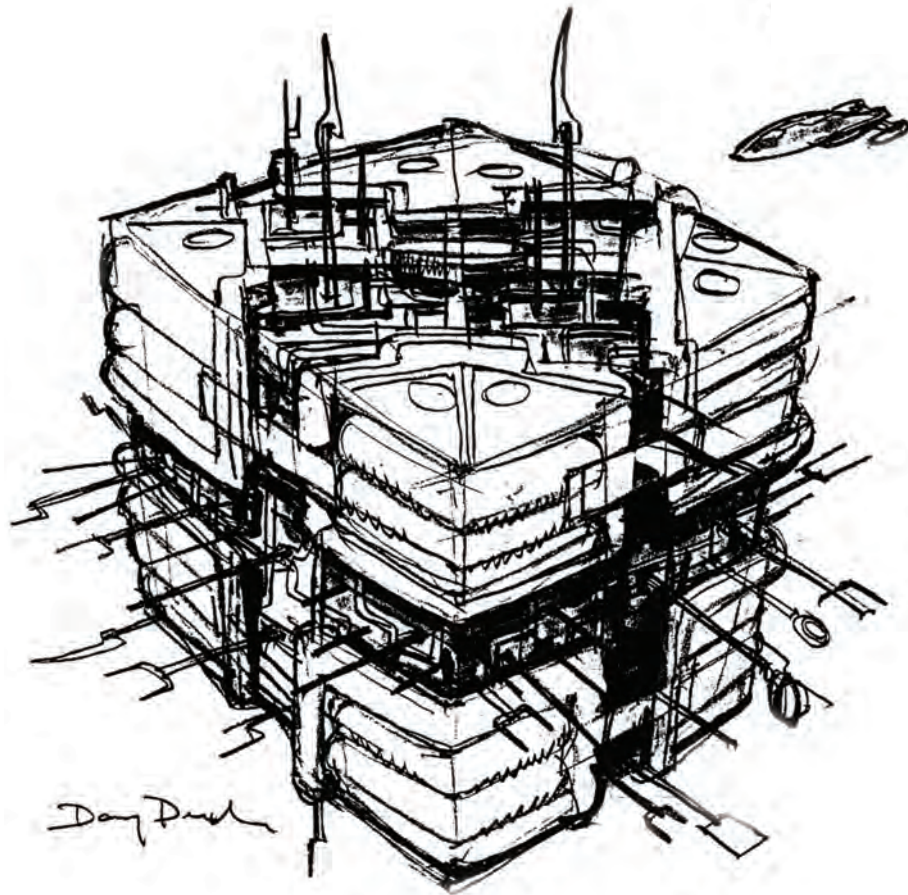
The script didn't give Drexler much help as to what it should like. As he remembered, it simply called for a "barrel cube", which implied that it had to be more threatening than the standard cube. "Ya gotta love that!" said Drexler. "I tried adding a lot of sharp pointy masts, spears and antennas."

"As a joke I even drew one up that was a pyramid. You know, the UPN (United Paramount Network) symbol ... a square, a ball, and a triangle. At that point, Borg ship design had mainly been a cube and a ball. The pyramid (triangle) would have completed the thing with tongue planted firmly in cheek. I knew the powers-that-be wanted a cube, but I couldn't resist."

#### CG MODEL

Drexler described the drawing that was chosen as basically "a Borg cube wearing a flak jacket!" Having designed the ship, he handed it on to his friend Koji Kuramura, who built the final model. "Koji sat right behind me," said Drexler. "As he worked, he'd call me over for a look-see and I'd put in my two cents' worth. If he needed clarification or more detailed sketches I would kick a few out for him."

Drexler says that most of the detailing was added at this stage. "You'll notice that my sketches were done in rather broad strokes. They were all there in the model. It was crazy to try and spell out all the mega-nooks and hyper-crannies of a Borg contrivance."

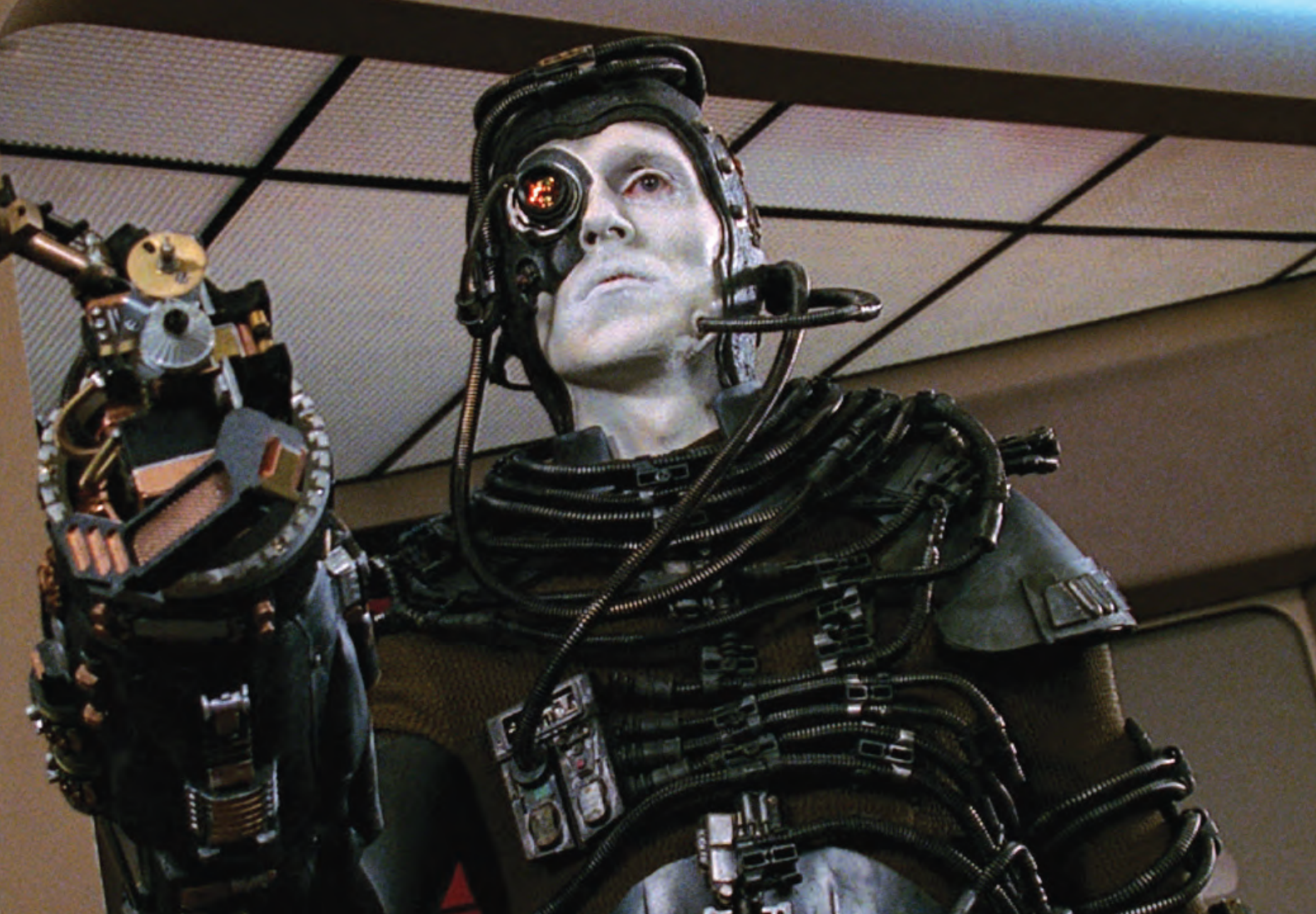


◀ Redesigning the Borg cube was a tough assignment. Drexler likened it to being asked to restyle a basketball – just about impossible. Some of his ideas included adding sharp pointy masts, spears and antennas as can be seen in these sketches. In the end, the producers decided they wanted a much less cluttered design – a decision with which Drexler wholeheartedly agreed.

◀◀ One of Drexler's designs depicted a pyramid. He never expected this to be accepted, but submitted it as an in-joke – making the shape of the different Borg vessels the same as the UPN logo, which consisted of a cube, a sphere and a pyramid.

◀ The design for the tactical cube that was approved by the producers retained the functional simplicity that was the hallmark of previous Borg ships. Drexler said that he liked the idea that the design said nothing about the Borg, while at the same time saying everything.





# THE BORG EVOLVE

The Borg were always immensely popular, but if they were to remain compelling the writers realized they would have to be far more than just automatons relentlessly assimilating everything in their path.

**T**HE BORG may have been one of *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*'s most popular villains, but, remarkably, they appeared in only six of the series' 178 episodes. It's easy to see why they weren't used more. It was difficult for the writers to come up with different stories that featured the Borg – their only goal was to assimilate every culture they encountered. There were also no individuals, so stories couldn't deal with Borg politics. However, the Borg were the most serious threat to the Federation and they were incredibly popular, which made them the ideal villains for a *STAR TREK* movie.

When writers Brannon Braga and Ronald D. Moore began work on *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT*, they were both excited by the possibilities of doing the Borg on a feature budget. Braga remembered that their first draft of the story involved time travel, but, in the early stages, the Borg didn't have a leader.

## BORG QUEEN

"We actually had a story for the movie without the Borg Queen," said Braga. "But, we realized – actually it came from a note from Jonathan Dolgen, head of features over here – we needed

▲ The Borg changed a great deal from their first appearance in *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*. They went from being a mindless species with no leader to one whose leader who wanted to bring everyone to a state of perfection – whether they wanted to or not.

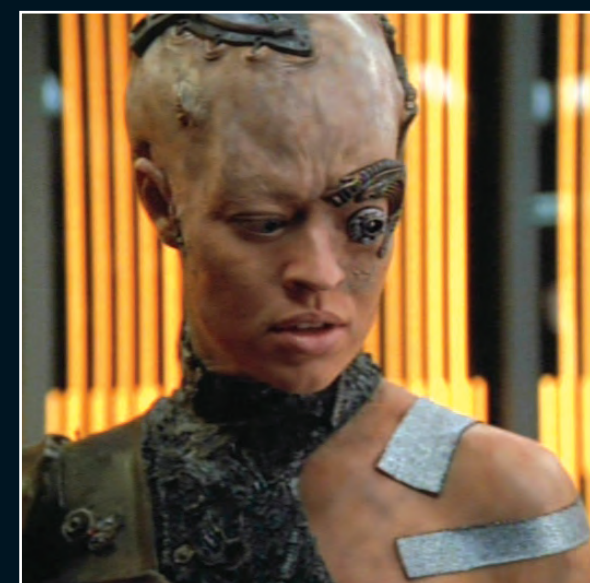
to put a face on these villains. He was right; we couldn't have sustained a movie with just the faceless hordes. So we invented the Queen. I think that was a really good thing to do. It gave the Borg a voice. It gave them a character."

Braga explained that there was a good reason for making the Borg's leader a woman. She could be a seductress who could tempt Data with that most basic of human needs – sex. As Braga said, "We knew immediately once we came up with the Queen that she was going to be 'creepy-sexy.' The Borg was this faceless horde and we wanted this villain to be a seductress, but be creepy at the same time."

As Braga, who later became *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*'s executive producer, said, she also gave the Borg a much-needed identity – finally they had a voice that could espouse a philosophy more than just 'resistance is futile.'

## EMERGING THEMES

"All sorts of themes came out of *FIRST CONTACT* with the Queen that we would end up using quite a bit on *VOYAGER*," said Braga. "We started coming up with ideas of what was the Borg's world view – the quest for perfection, the idea that most things were viewed as weaknesses; the idea that the Borg, in fact, believed that they were helping others by bringing them to perfection, that it was a strangely philanthropic goal that the Borg had. On *VOYAGER*, we continued to stand upon individuality versus the hive mind. The struggle of Seven of Nine to some



degree was embodied in the struggle of Data and the Borg Queen. That kind of moral banter between the Queen and Data would be visited again and again on *VOYAGER*, whether it was between Janeway and Seven, or Seven and the Queen, or Janeway and the Queen."

## RETURN TO TELEVISION

Once *FIRST CONTACT* was over, it was inevitable that the Borg's next appearance would be on television. As it turned out, the Borg only started to feature on *VOYAGER* when Braga took control of the writing staff in the third season. The two-part 'Scorpion,' was one of *STAR TREK*'s most cinematic stories. It featured an all-out war between the Borg and Species 8472 and, in the second part, introduced us to Seven of Nine, the Borg drone who would become a crew member.

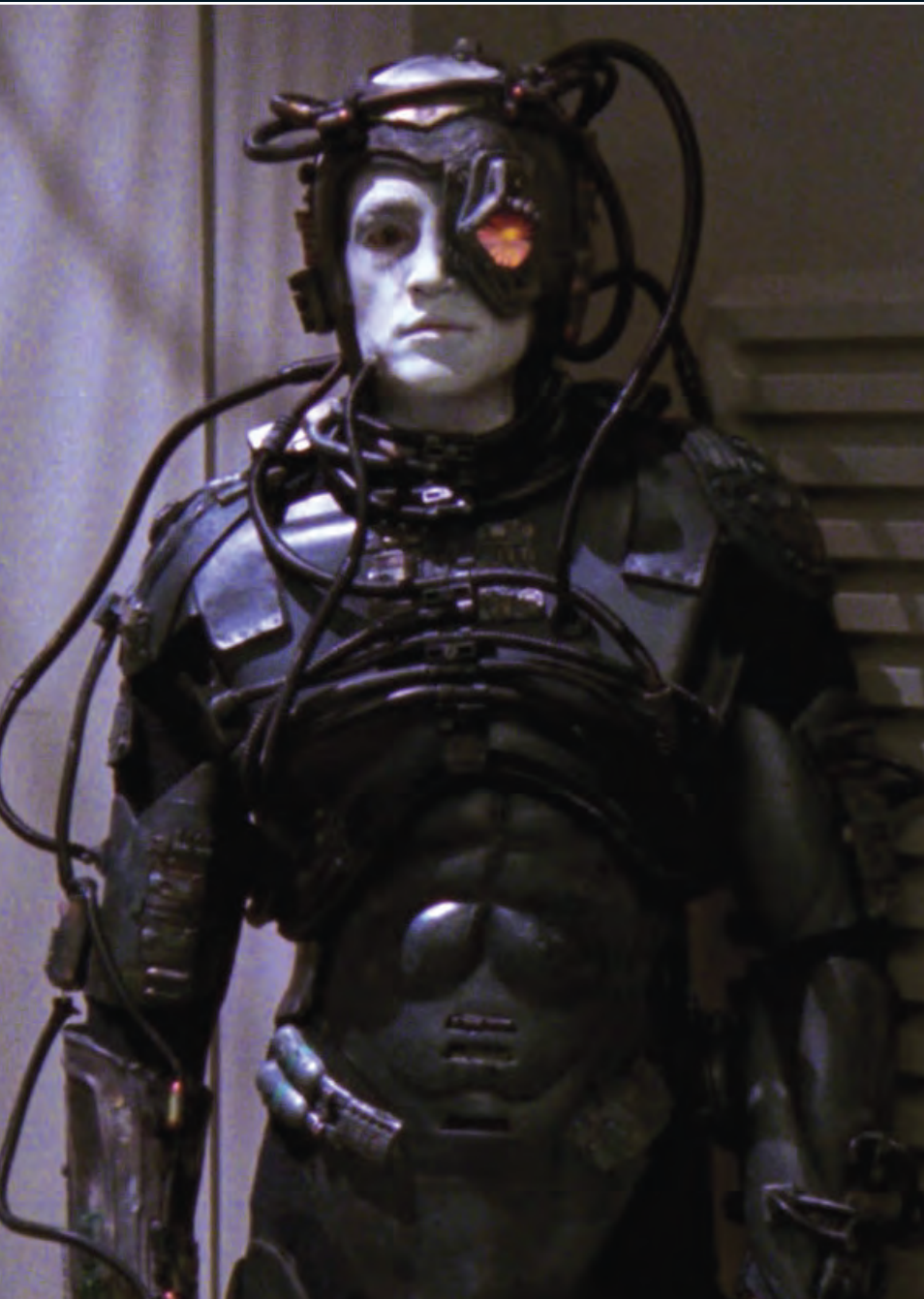
As Braga explained, 'Scorpion' was based on a relatively simple premise. "The origin of that show was 'somebody is kicking the Borg's butt,' then it evolved into Janeway's going to make an alliance with the Borg. A 'deal with the devil' was an interesting idea." He added that it was only as he worked on the show that he developed the idea of leaving a Borg on the *U.S.S. Voyager*.

"Strangely enough, when we wrote Part I we weren't even thinking about Seven of Nine," said

▲ The Borg Queen became the mouthpiece of the Borg, and ensured they were no longer a "faceless horde." She also embodied everything that was lacking in the Borg – she was an emotionally and sexually aware individual who understood exactly how to tempt Data.

◀ The Borg became an essential part of *STAR TREK: VOYAGER* when Seven joined the crew in the fourth season. At first, Seven was extremely upset and angry to be parted from the Collective, but she also helped us understand what they were thinking.





▲ Hugh was one of the Borg that had been freed from the Collective in 'I, Borg.' This had been a very successful episode, but he was very mechanical and robotic. Braga said he wanted Seven to talk with Borg terminology, but also keep her a little more casual and easy to listen to than Hugh.

Braga. "I think that the way it happened was I was talking to (producer) Joe Menosky in the middle of the night and I said how cool it would be to put a Borg on board and what would happen if a crew member was a Borg? I called Rick Berman and it was his idea to make it a female, and it kind of went from there."

Braga said that he and Berman had learned a lot of lessons from the Borg Queen, which they could apply to Seven. Significantly, he said, they knew that the Borg could be sexy.

"I think we always saw her as a Borg bombshell," said Braga. "We thought that was



▲ Seven's relationship with Janeway was absolutely central to *VOYAGER*. Janeway acted as a mentor to Seven, and forced her to reconsider many of her attitudes, forcing her to look at her loyalties.

an interesting dichotomy, because Borg were immediately somewhat creepy and repulsive, but we also knew from the Borg Queen that they could be kinky-sexy, so we saw Seven of Nine pretty clearly from the beginning."

#### DIFFERENT KIND OF DRONE

Seven's creators also had some experience of dealing with former drones – on *TNG*, another drone, Hugh, had been liberated from the collective in the episode 'I, Borg' and had returned in 'Descent.'

Whereas Hugh was confused by leaving the collective and soon rejected the Borg, Seven was much more focused and angry. "Seven was disconnected and she was not confused," said Braga. "She wanted to go back, and even after a long time she thought of the Borg as a superior species, but she grew to appreciate her humanity enough that she was willing to protect it."

Seven reached her most important crossroads in 'Dark Frontier' when she rejected the opportunity to rejoin the Borg in favor of her life on *Voyager*. This telefilm also featured the return of the Borg Queen, a character Braga had always planned to bring back.

"Janeway was the surrogate mother and the Queen was the natural mother," said Braga, "and it was a struggle for Seven between the two of them. You got a nice emotional investment for Janeway and the Queen, and you put Seven in the middle, and she was torn about her loyalties."

#### QUEEN UNDER PRESSURE

'Unimatrix Zero' revealed that some drones had been living an alternate life in cyberspace while they were regenerating. The story ended with the destruction of Unimatrix Zero, but left the resistance intact. Braga's main aim wasn't to alter the Borg forever, rather to show us a new side to the Borg Queen, who was deeply disturbed at the thought she might lose control of the Collective. "We wanted to give Susanna Thompson, who played the Queen, something interesting to do, and again we didn't want to just wheel out the Borg Queen; we wanted to show new dimensions, so we thought it would be fun to see her unravel a bit. She'd never been threatened before and suddenly she couldn't hear the voices of drones all around her; she was losing her children and it was freaking her out."

Braga had no doubts that the Borg were used well on *VOYAGER*, but he was quick to point out that it was difficult to keep dealing with, and overcoming, such a powerful foe.

"No enemy's invincible. In fact, ironically, the problem was not that they were invincible; the problem became that the seemingly invincible foe became vulnerable. Every time we met them, we got away. At this point in the game you started to wonder, well, instead of sending one cube, how about 50?"

In the end, Braga was also keen to push into new aspects of the Borg, and he was convinced that this was the best way to keep them interesting. "It was really a matter of making sure that you kept the Borg fresh, that every time you told a story there was some new dimension to the Borg that had been added. You wanted to keep the Borg growing and you wanted to keep them interesting in the same way that the Klingons were always new and fresh. You added dimensions to them."



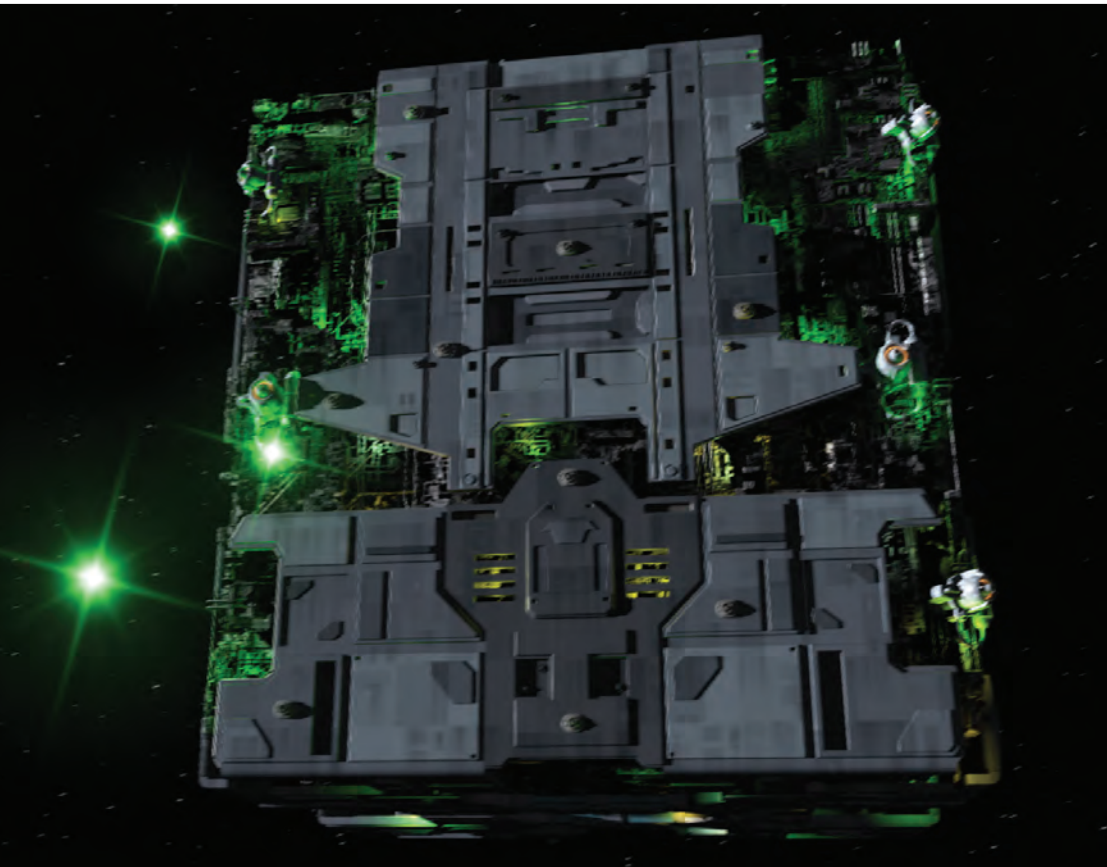
◀ The Borg suffered a serious reverse in 'Unimatrix Zero,' when the Queen realized that several drones were living a free life in cyberspace. It was important to Braga that the Borg Queen showed a new side – deeply disturbed that she might be losing control of the Collective.

◀ It was difficult to keep using the Borg and keep them interesting. The problem was that it was becoming less and less believable that *Voyager* always survived, even if it went up against numerous cubes. It became important that each time the Borg were used, it took their storyline further.

◀ The Borg Queen became a recurring threat on *VOYAGER*, acting as an evil counterpart to Janeway. The final story saw a major confrontation between Janeway and the Borg Queen, with the Borg suffering a major blow at the expense of the older Janeway.



# ON SCREEN



## TRIVIA

An unforeseen problem occurred just prior to the filming of 'Unimatrix Zero, Part I' when Jeri Ryan broke her foot tripping on a step. Production designer Richard James had to keep this in mind when he designed the set for Unimatrix Zero, which took the form of a lush forest. He said, "We mounded up the shubbery to hide Jeri's broken foot and had to keep the paths flat." Director Allan Kroeker added, "We used every trick we could think of to make Jeri walk. One scene was a kind of walk-and-talk Steadicam shot in the forest. She had to use a cane, but we managed to hide it."



One of the decapitated Borg heads that was seen in 'Unimatrix Zero' was actually a mold of Brent Spiner's [Data's] head, and had been previously used in *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*.



Mark Deakins, who played Axum in 'Unimatrix Zero,' had previously appeared as Tournel, a member of the Ba'ku in *STAR TREK: INSURRECTION*, and Turanj, a Hirogen hunter on the *STAR TREK: VOYAGER* episodes 'The Killing Game, Part I & II.'

- FIRST APPEARANCE: 'UNIMATRIX ZERO, PART I' (VOY)
- TV APPEARANCE: STAR TREK: VOYAGER
- DESIGNED BY: Doug Drexler

### KEY APPEARANCES

#### STAR TREK: VOYAGER 'Unimatrix Zero, Part I'

The crew of the *U.S.S. Voyager* NCC-74656 learn that some Borg drones are able to visit a virtual reality known as Unimatrix Zero while they are regenerating. Here, the drones become their individual selves from before they were assimilated. When they discover that the Borg Queen is trying to destroy Unimatrix Zero, the *Voyager* crew form a plan to infiltrate a Borg tactical cube and download a nanovirus that will save these drones. Unfortunately, when Captain Janeway, Torres and Tuvok are soon captured and assimilated.

#### STAR TREK: VOYAGER 'Unimatrix Zero, Part II'

The away team were given an inoculation before embarking on the mission that means they won't become fully assimilated for a few hours. Disguised as Borg drones, they are able to move freely about the tactical cube, and they manage to download the nanovirus into the central plexus. By this time, however, the away team has been discovered and *Voyager* has had to retreat after being badly damaged by the tactical cube. It looks as if the plan has failed, but then the nanovirus starts to take effect and the renegade Borg join the fight.

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- Concept artist *Rick Sternbach* talks about his design for the *U.S.S. Relativity*
- We take a look at some of the best ever visual effects in *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*, including the Utopia Planitia shipyards over Mars

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