XINDI-AQUATIC CRUISER

TYPE: CRUISER
LAUNCHED: 22nd C
LENGTH: 1,125 METERS
WEAPONS: PARTICLE BEAM
**Xindi-Aquatic Cruiser**

**Specification**

- **Type:** Cruiser
- **Operated By:** Xindi-Aquatics
- **Launched:** 22nd Century
- **Length:** 1,125 meters (approx.)
- **Propulsion:** Subspace Vortex
- **Weaponry:** Particle Beam

**Stand Assembly:**

1. Slide the stand over the back of the ship.
2. Final position.

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**Contents**

- **P04:** Xindi-Aquatic Cruiser
- **P10:** Designing the Ship
- **P14:** Creating the Aquatics
- **P18:** On Screen
Among the Xindi species’ ships, the Aquatic cruiser was the most tactically advanced, but also the slowest.

The Aquatic cruiser featured an arrow-shaped front section, behind which was a narrow neck structure, and then the main body flared out into a swept-wing design before narrowing again at the rear, so that it resembled a manta ray. The overall shape of the ship was extremely hydrodynamic, meaning it was as at home underwater as it was in space. There were huge windows at various points around the hull allowing the aquatic-based crew a view outside the ship.

HOSTING VISITORS

While most of the interior of the vessel was filled with water, there was at least one small area that was dry and contained breathable air. This meant land-based life forms could come aboard and communicate with the Xindi-Aquatic crew.

On the ventral side of the cruiser, towards the rear, was an enormous cargo hold, or hangar bay, which was comfortably large enough to house the Enterprise. This proved particularly useful in 2154 when an Aquatic cruiser was used to transport the Enterprise into battle in order to help stop the Xindi superweapon.

All five of the Xindi species had created this superweapon in order to destroy Earth. They had been told by a race of transdimensional beings they called the Guardians that humans would eventually wipe out the Xindi. As the superweapon neared completion, the crew of Enterprise managed to convince the Xindi-Primates and Xindi-Arboreals that it was not humans that posed a threat, but the Guardians themselves. These transdimensional beings, also known as Sphere Builders, were in the process of reconfiguring space around Xindi worlds in the Delphic Expanse to make it habitable for them, but deadly for everyone else.
While the Primates and the Arboreals were convinced by the evidence presented to them about the Guardians’ duplicity, the rest of the Xindi species were not. The Reptilians and Insectoids were still determined to destroy Earth, while the Aquatics, notorious for taking an excruciatingly long time to come to a decision, needed longer to evaluate the evidence.

Eventually, after the crew of Enterprise promised to find a way to reverse the effects of the spheres in the Delphic Expanse and safeguard Xindi worlds, the Aquatics decided not to proceed with the superweapon. The Aquatic vessels’ superior firepower soon proved decisive as the Reptilian and Insectoid lost eight ships while Enterprise’s new allies only had two ships disabled.

**GUARDIAN INTERVENTION**

It would not have been long before the Reptilian and Insectoid vessels would have been defeated, but then the Guardians intervened. They triggered their spheres to create spatial anomalies, which ripped through the hulls of the Aquatic ships, disabling them and releasing water into space.

The superweapon and a Reptilian ship then opened another vortex and resumed their journey to Earth. While the removing Aquatic ships had the firepower to stop them, they did not have the necessary speed to catch them before it would be too late. Fortunately, Captain Archer was able to lead a team in a much faster Primate vessel to intercept the superweapon and destroy it before it reached Earth.

Meanwhile, Enterprise destroyed sphere 41, which created a cascade effect, wiping out all the spheres and safeguarding Xindi space. With the threat from the Guardians over, a Xindi-Aquatic cruiser helped Enterprise return home in less than a day by transporting it in its cargo hold to a distance of 800,000 kilometers from Earth.

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**DATA FEED**

Despite living in water, the Xindi-Aquatics had similar facial features to humanoids. They had three fingers on each forelimb, while their hind limbs were fins. They were renowned for taking an inordinately long time to reach a decision, but their caution also made them the most level-headed of the Xindi species. This was why Degra, the Xindi-Primate scientist, had the Aquatics build the superweapon undersea on Azati Prime, as he felt that they could be trusted.
The Xindi-Aquatic language was similar to that of humpback whales. When the Aquatics spoke in the past tense, they switched to SONAR, but they also had a mistrust of the spoken word. Each Xindi species had two representatives that sat on the Xindi Council. One of the Aquatic representatives was Kiaphet Amman’sor, a female member of the Ibix dynasty, a very wealthy, very powerful family. Her opinions carried considerable weight with the rest of the council. In addition to the cruiser, the Xindi-Aquatics also operated smaller, more maneuverable scout ships in the 22nd century. The Aquatic cruiser was more powerful than other Xindi ships and proved crucial in the battle against the Reptilian and Insectoid vessels that were protecting the superweapon. The Aquatics weighed up all options carefully, and the rest of the Xindi species had a saying that it was easier to count the stars in the sky than it was for an Aquatic to reach a decision. It once took the Aquatics six days just to agree to attend a meeting over a simple logistical matter.

All Xindi species revered the Guardians, a race of transdimensional beings, as they had helped them find new worlds and valuable resources after the destruction of their homeworld. What the Xindi did not realize was that the Guardians were also responsible for the spheres that were turning their area of space into transdimensional wasteland. In effect, the Guardians were turning Xindi space into a home for themselves, and making it uninhabitable for any other species. As the Xindi treated the Guardians almost like gods, it was difficult for them to accept this truth, but eventually the crew of Enterprise NX-01 brought them compelling evidence. The Primates and the Arboreals were the first to be convinced, but the Reptilians and the Insectoids were unmoved. It was only when the Aquatics were persuaded that they had enough firepower to take on the Reptilians and Insectoids, and stop the Guardians’ plans that would have killed them all.

DATA FEED

In addition to the cruiser, the Xindi-Aquatics also operated smaller, more maneuverable scout ships in the 22nd century.
AQUATICS

Creating the Aquatics

One of the great innovations in STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE’s third season was the introduction of two Xindi species that would be created entirely in CG. “We wanted to get away from guys in suits,” ENTERPRISE’s VFX producer Dan Curry recalls. “It was something that Rick [Berman] and the writers wanted to do, and now we had CG technology and a great team of animators to do the work for us so it was possible.”

Berman and Braga’s concept for the Xindi called for genuinely alien designs for both of which were designed by Curry, working with the CG teams at Eden FX.

Curry’s design for the Aquatics was loosely based on a Mosasaurus, a kind of aquatic lizard from the Cretaceous period that, visually at least, had a lot in common with monitor lizards and eels. “I wanted something that had that kind of prehistoric look,” he explains. “But I made it mammalian rather than reptilian. Then I gave it bigger arms and opposable thumbs so it could have technology. Since it’s a sentient species it was important to me that it looked intelligent. The other Xindi species had to be able to relate to it and respect it. If it didn’t look wise it would be fake.”

In order to give the Aquatics that sense of wisdom, Curry drew inspiration from some marine creatures on Earth, as he explains, a slightly more unexpected source.

“I always think of whales and dolphins as having a wisdom of their own that is difficult for us bipeds to fathom. I didn’t articulate it much at the time, but I lived in Thailand for a long time when I was in the Peace Corps, and I got a chance to work with elephants, which have genuine wisdom. I think that led us to a kind of pachyderm-like skin texture and the way the eyes are set. In a lot of sea creatures the eyes are set on the side because they are looking out for predators, and I thought it would be smart to have that stereoscopic vision helped with that sense of wisdom here and it also gives it a little bit more of an anthropomorphic quality.”

Curry produced a concept drawing that executives signed off on without asking for any modifications. The next stage was to take the concept to Eden FX, where CG modeler David Morton and animator Eric Hance would actually make the creature.

Brought to Life

“Each one is a really great artist,” Curry says. “It’s easy for me to do a drawing. It’s another issue for them to make it look real. You can see how beautifully modeled it is and the fluidity. Dave’s beautiful facial textures made a huge difference and gave it a feeling of intelligence. Using those textures, giving the skin the proper amount of crenellations and folds and the way the gills move, that was Dave’s artistry.

“When it came to the rigging that was Eric. We didn’t want it to move like an excited guppy. We looked at research on tails and stuff but mostly I think I just went in and mimed how I wanted it to move!”

Designing and animating the creature was only part of the job. It is notoriously difficult to produce convincing water effects in CG.

“And in those days,” Curry says, “it was a lot tougher. We were before embryonic stage, we were in zygote stage. Where water becomes really difficult is where you have waves and it interacts with physical objects and stuff like that.”

The Aquatics only lived in water. For the Xindi council chamber, the team at Eden FX built a CG set filled with virtual water that the Aquatics could move around in. Curry says that this made the virtual water much easier to deal with since it avoided the need for waves.

The team’s solution was to keep the Aquatics in tanks filled with water. This meant there would be no need for waves and since the entire environment would be CG, it could be kept under control. “We knew what our limitations were going to be.” Curry explains. “We saw them mostly in tanks and then it’s just like putting them in a smoke field.”

Team Effort

The finished result was one of the most genuinely alien creatures that has ever appeared on STAR TREK. Curry was delighted with the Aquatics and insists that enormous amount of credit is due to the team at Eden FX. “We all had a really close working relationship but the final version is a tribute to those great animators.”
Bird of Prey

STAR TREK ENTERPRISE’ s third season was dominated by the Xindi—a culture that consisted of five different species all of which came from the same planet. Despite their common origins, each Xindi species had their own distinct look and technologies so required their own design of ship. The Aquatics had been introduced at the beginning of the year but we only got to see their ships towards the end of the season, and as concept artist John Eaves remembers, the first Xindi Aquatic ship was something of a false start. “The first ship is an unusual little thing. You see it in ‘Azati Prime’, the episode where they find the bomb underwater.” That ship made the briefest, blink and you’ll miss it, appearance and can just be seen “swimming” around the Xindi weapon.

As Eaves recalls, his first pass was rejected for being too like something that could be made on Earth. “I was trying to find a shape that was different. Ages ago I drew a spaceship for an Australian show. It had this big cannon that sat underneath the vessel. Kind of like a B-52 that has that gigantic fuel tank underneath. My first idea was ‘What if the armament was concealed underneath the ship, in between the wings, kind of like a belly stinger gun that was hidden away and was its own little independent piece?’”

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relatively conventional and looked like something that had been manufactured. When Eaves returned to his drawing board he started to push in a more organic and “marine” direction.

**WATERY INSPIRATION**

“The Aquatics were an area that we’d never explored before. Using fish and stingrays as reference was a lot of fun and added a new direction that you couldn’t use for the other stuff.”

His next designs were clearly inspired by sea animals, in particular squid. To Eaves’ mind the Aquatics’ ships would have been produced by genuinely alien technologies and could even be mistaken for creatures. “I was trying to suggest a different kind of material, where there were not a lot of panel lines, or bolting, like you’d see on a normal ship. I was imagining some kind of molded material so I tried to steer away from obvious panel lines that would make you think it was assembled. That was kind of the identity of it. Instead of cloaking, it would just blend in with whatever kind of life forms were in their ocean.”

**HIDDEN VESSEL**

One of these designs was actually made as a CG model, but it only appeared in the background and didn’t have a major part in the story. A few months later the scripts called for the Aquatics and their ships to play a much greater role, and, as Eaves recalls, it was one that really wasn’t compatible with the design that he had come up with.

“The story was very distinct – the Aquatic ship had compartments that hid the Enterprise. That dictated that it was going to be big. They felt the first version had too friendly a shape. It was more animal than ship, and the scale felt a little too small to house the Enterprise. The angles weren’t sharp enough and it didn’t have the aggressive nature they wanted.”

“I think I did maybe three passes on this new one. There was a wild one. I still had INSURRECTION in my mind. I always liked that piano detail that we did for the Son’a ships, so I made a kind of Aquatic version of that. That was a fun one. But the producers said, ‘It’s kind of a nice idea, but keep going’.

“From there we went to a design with a bunch of windows down the side. That one looks more like the other Xindi ships. I tried to tie the architecture in to what we’d done before. It had a lot in common with Degra’s shuttle but that wasn’t what they were looking for so it didn’t get much more of a response other than ‘Give it another go’.”

**AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT**

This design did, however, have elements that gave Eaves the clues that would take him to the final version. “They liked the fact that it had a lot of glass on the outside. One of the story points was that it cracks open and the Aquatics float out through the damaged portions. so I kept that. That squid head was something they always liked. It travels through all the versions in one way or another so I kept that too. In the final design I just made everything more angular. I was a fan of the ‘Stingray’ TV show so I tried to do a combination of those kind of ships with my own Manta ray kind of thing.” Eaves’s new design had a squid head at the rear with extended wings and an open neck and this version was approved without any changes.

“They liked that shape,” he recalls. “They liked the split hole in the center. I always tried to do that – give it that...
The final design was easily Eaves’ favorite and, he says, it combines the best elements of everything that had come before.

Eaves describes this version of the design as ‘wild’ and points that the ‘piano detail’ is something he borrowed from his designs for the Son’a ships.

Eaves’ second pass at the large Aquatic cruiser was deliberately designed to have echoes of other Xindi ships, such as the Insectoid fighters and Degra’s shuttle. It also introduced the idea of large, visible, areas of water.

The ship was then handed over to Eden FX where it was built as a CG model. The VFX team were excited by the idea that when the ship was attacked, the shell would rupture and the water would turn to ice as it froze in space, and it was important to them to make it clear that the ship was filled with water. Although VFX producer Dan Curry did pause to wonder how the Xindi had transported such a large volume of water into space.

Eaves also points out a little nod to one of his own earlier designs. “The final one actually has a little bit of the Romulan Valdore on it. Those big round pods on the back of it – I liked the way it looked on the Valdore so I pulled that over here and gave it a Xindi twist.”

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ALIEN TEXTURES

As Eden FX’s Rob Bonchune remembers they came up with a texture for the hull that was “like semi-translucent glass with lots of refraction of light going through the ‘water’ and then the ‘hull.’ It also had a Fresnel/oily/soap bubble surface effect that made areas change specular color as it moved or rotated from the camera.”

The finished model was one of the most impressive Xindi ships, which dwarfed its Reptilian and Insectoid rivals. And the VFX team got the shot they always wanted as the climatic battle involved a shot of the Aquatic ship cracking in two.
ON SCREEN

TRIVIA

Scott Macdonald, who played the Xindi-Reptilian Commander Dolim, also featured in the other modern STAR TREK series. His first appearance was as Tosk, a reptilian-like species, in the DEEP SPACE NINE EPISODE 'Captive Pursuit.' After this, he was promised a less makeup-intensive role in any future appearances. He then played N'Vek, a Romulan, in THE NEXT GENERATION episode 'Face of the Enemy,' and then Ensign Rollins in 'Caretaker,' the pilot of VOYAGER. His other appearance was another heavy makeup role as the Jem'Hadar Goren'Agar in 'Hippocratic Oath.'

FIRST APPEARANCE: 'COUNTDOWN' (ENT)

TV APPEARANCES: STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE

DESIGNED BY: John Eaves

In 'Zero Hour,' T'Pol finally reveals her age to be 65, something Trip Tucker had wondered about from 'Carbon Creek,' the second episode of the second series.

Three of the Xindi species – the Primates, Arboreals and Reptilians – spoke a common language that could be understood by Starfleet universal translators. The Insectoids and Aquatics understood this language, but were physically incapable of speaking it, which meant the other species had to learn their language. This was not easy, as there were 67 dialects of Insectoid.

In 'Zero Hour,' the superweapon and a single Reptilian ship have entered a vortex on their way to Earth. Captain Archer takes a small team in Dega's fast ship in the hope of catching them, while Enterprise prepares to destroy Sphere 41 and bring down all the spheres. With help from Commander Stran and his Andorian ship, Archer and his team successfully stop the weapon, and Enterprise uses a deflector pulse to destroy the sphere network. As thanks, an Aquatic cruiser takes Enterprise home, but Archer appears to have perished when the superweapon exploded.

KEY APPEARANCES

STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE

‘Countdown’
The Reptilians and the Insectoids are in control of the Xindi superweapon, but they are unable to launch it. Three Xindi species must give their codes for that to happen, and the kidnapped Hoshi Sato is forced to decipher the Aquatics’ code. Meanwhile, Captain Archer convinces the Aquatics to help stop the weapon with their powerful cruisers in return for destroying the Delphic Expanse spheres. The Aquatics’ ships give Enterprise NC-01’s allies the edge, but just as it looks like they will win, the Sphere Builders create spatial anomalies that tear the allied ships apart.

STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE

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