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SON'A FLAGSHIP
SPECIAL ISSUE

SON'A COMMAND

OPERATIONAL: 2375

LENGTH: 354 METERS

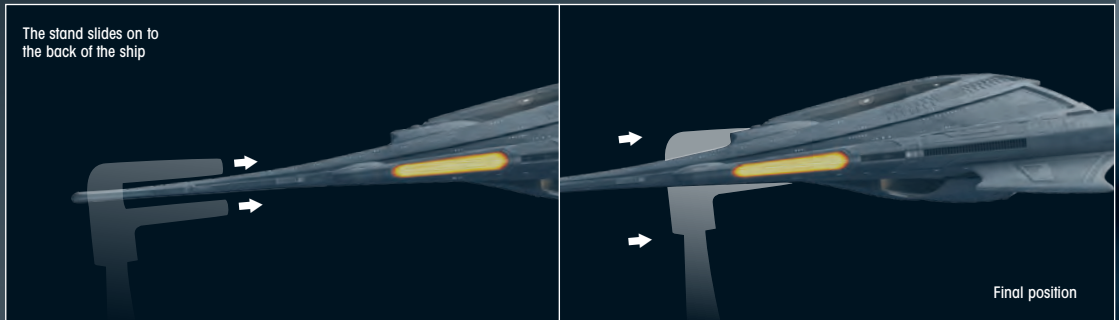
ISOLYTIC SUBSPACE BURST

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SON'A FLAGSHIP



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SON'A FLAGSHIP

SPECIFICATION



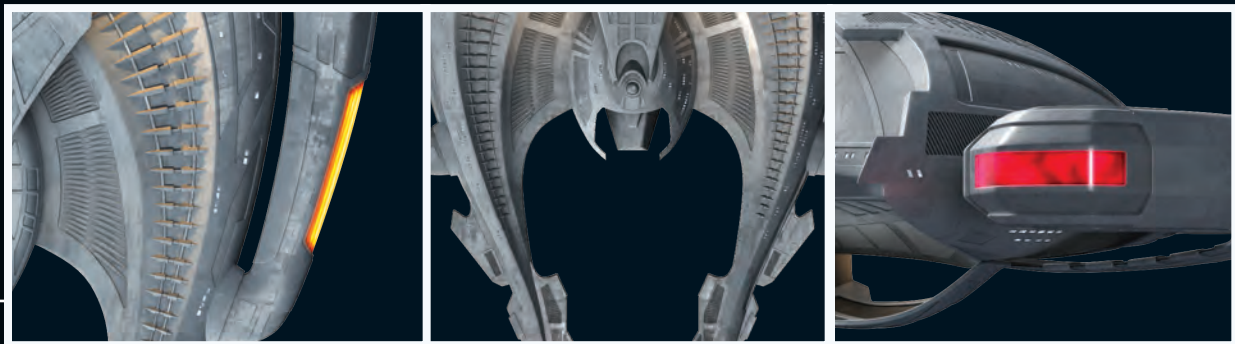
TYPE: SON'A COMMAND VESSEL

OPERATIONAL: 2375

COMMANDER: ADHAR RU'AFO

WEAPONRY: PHASERS

ISOLYTIC SUBSPACE BURST



A large, sleek, grey Klingon warship, likely a Starliner-class vessel, is shown in flight against a dramatic, reddish-brown nebula. The ship's design is highly aerodynamic and angular, with a prominent bridge structure and multiple weapon emplacements. The background is filled with swirling clouds of gas and dust, creating a sense of intense action and danger.

ADHAR RU'AFO'S FLAGSHIP

The Son'a leader operated a powerful ship that was fitted with illegal weapons.



◀ The Son'a flagship was a powerful vessel that was approximately half the size of the *Sovereign*-class U.S.S. *Enterprise*.

The Son'a were an offshoot of the Ba'ku people, who operated a small fleet of ships in the latter part of the 24th century. Their leader, Adhar Ru'afo, commanded the fleet from his flagship, which had a different design from the Son'a battleships and shuttles. Like all the Son'a ships, it had been adapted to operate in the unstable area of space known as the Briar patch,

and its communications were not effected by the subspace interference in the area.

There were relatively small numbers of Son'a, and their ships were mostly operated by the T'Pol and the Ellora, two races that they had conquered and integrated into their culture as a labor force. The flagship was heavily automated and Ru'afo controlled many of its functions from a unit he wore on his wrist.

All the Son'a ships were heavily shielded and fitted with tractor beams. They were armed with conventional phasers and with illegal isolytic subspace weapons, which had been banned by the second Khitomer accords.



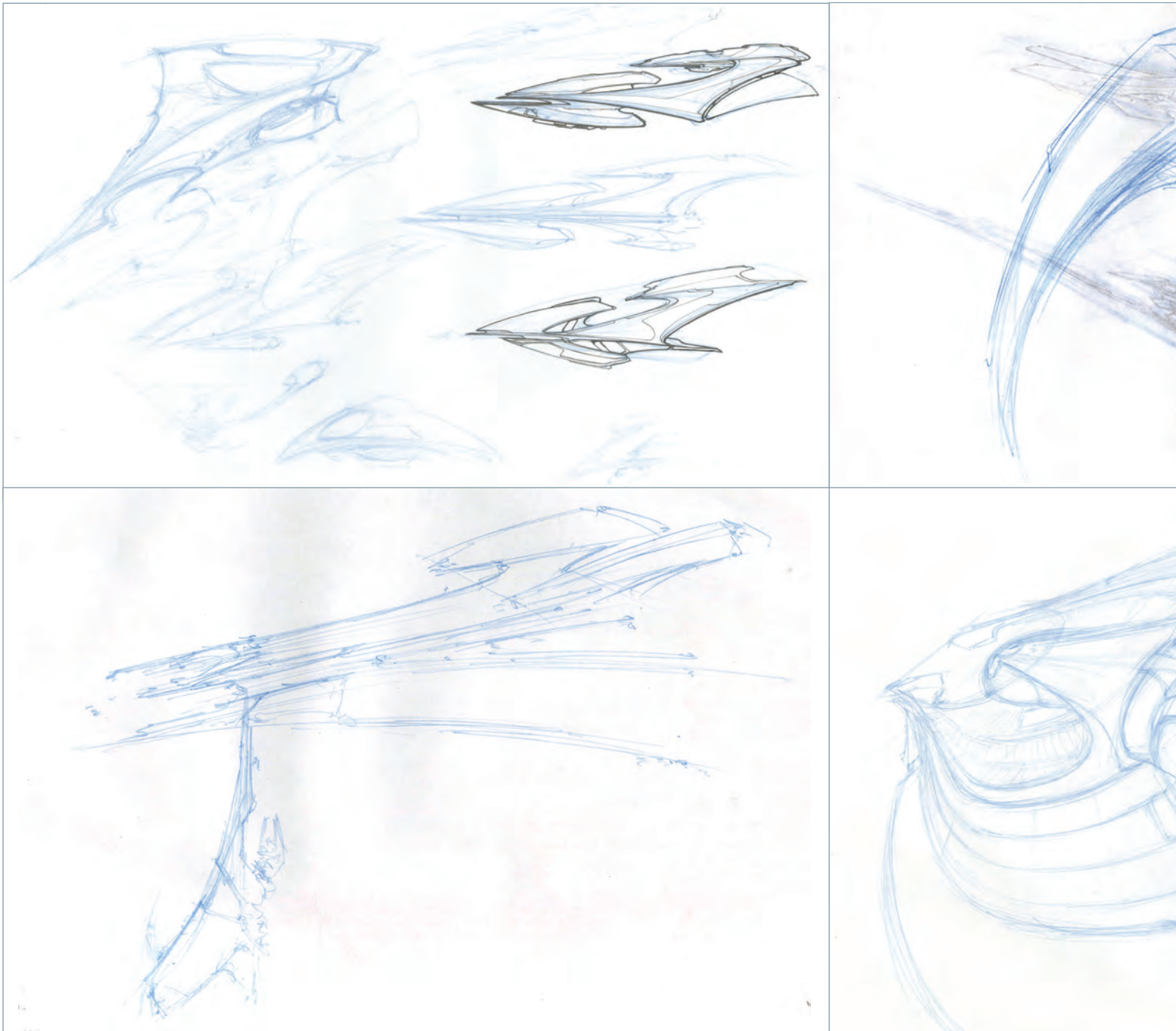
◀ Like all the Son'a, Ru'afo was obsessed with prolonging his life and planned to harvest metaphasic energy from the Ba'ku homeworld to regenerate himself.



DESIGNING THE **SON'A**
FLAGSHIP

Ru'afo's ship was inspired by a horeshoe and a piano, and would get completely turned around by the VFX team.



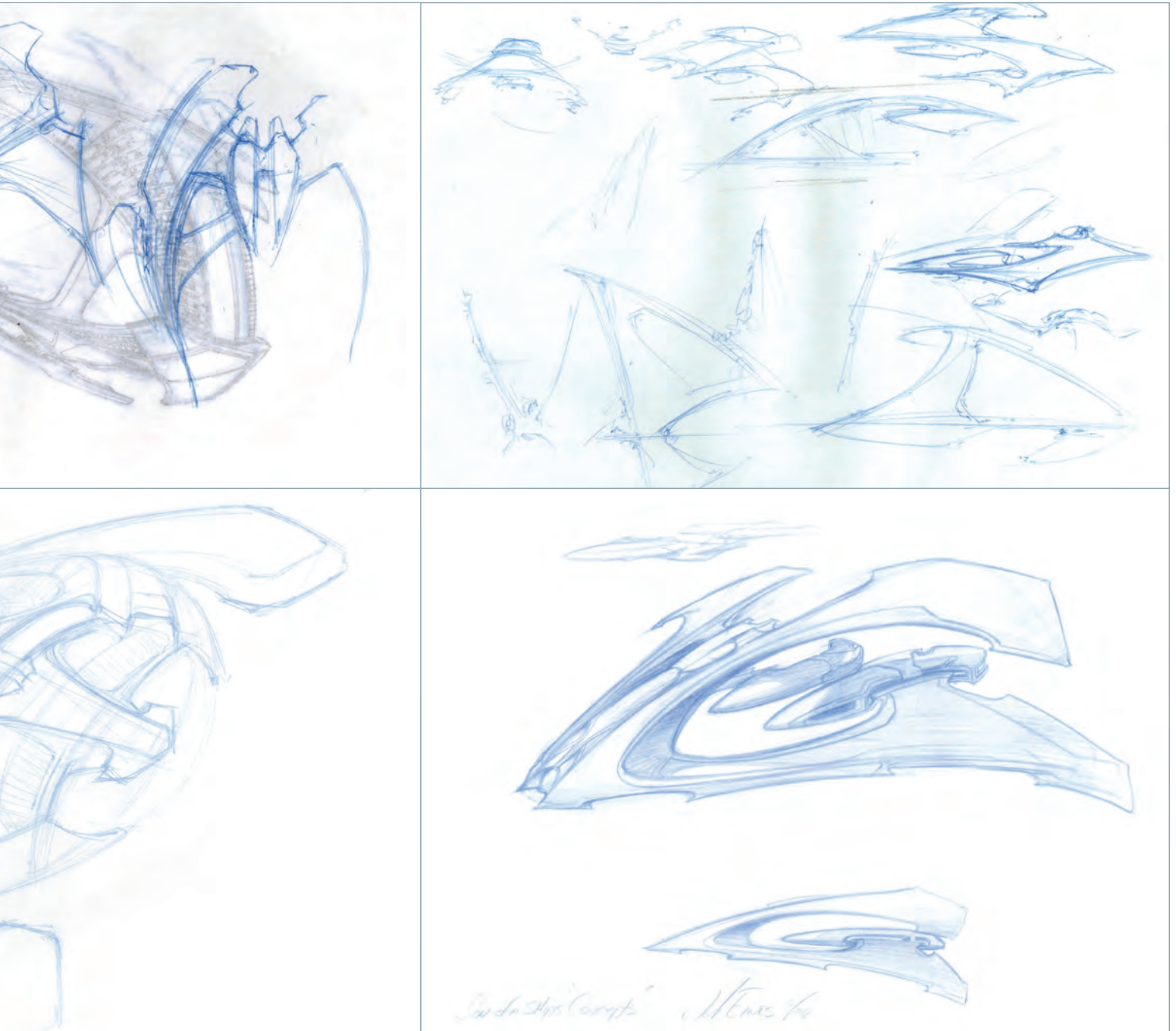


The script for *STAR TREK: INSURRECTION* called for an entirely new alien race with new costumes, new makeup and new ships. The details of what the Son'a vessels looked like would be left to Herman Zimmerman's art department. Zimmerman handed the job of designing them to concept artist John Eaves.

When the art department started work, they didn't have a full script, just a document called a beat sheet, which laid out all the major action points of the movie. "The beat sheet," Eaves recalls, "said we needed a flagship for the Son'a

leader Ru'afo and some battleships. We started with the battle ship. The first sketches I did were all for that. We figured that Ru'afo's ship was going to be a smaller version of that, so it would evolve from all the groundwork we did now and we would get it to it later."

Because the Son'a were an entirely new race, Eaves couldn't start by adapting familiar designs, as he had done for the Borg on *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT*. Instead he had to come up with something new. As he explains, inspiration for starship design can come from the most unlikely



places. "You look at anything and you can see a spaceship in it. We didn't have any architecture to fall back on and I wanted to give a whole different kind of look to the Son'a designs, so I kind of went with yard toys. My daughter was very big on rodeo at the time, and we had horseshoes all over the property. The other thing we had were lawn darts, which were these big darts like hoops that you throw at posts. On top of that, we had just got 'The Road Warrior' on laser disc and the boomerang was a big thing in that. I remember thinking, 'I can turn these things into spaceships.'"

Eaves started the design process by making a series of loose sketches in blue pencil. "The sketches are just roughs trying to break out a shape that I like," he explains "You'd do the blue pencil and then you'd ink over the top of it so you didn't do a hundred drawings. Once I had done that, I'd present it to Herman, who would say 'Yay' or 'Nay.' At this stage I was trying to figure out what kind of shape I was going to go with. Thinking about the yard toys, I had the idea that the battle ship could be a stretched out horseshoe."

Even at this early stage, Zimmerman would walk

▲ Eaves started the design process by producing a series of loose sketches in blue pencil. These early sketches were meant to be for the Son'a battleship, but he was confident they would also evolve into Ru'afa's flagship.

past Eaves' desk and comment on his work, giving him guidance and pushing him in the direction that he wanted. "Herman said, 'Let's make these ships rather flat because they are flying through this area called the Briar patch.' Some of the sketches I had done had a little depth to them so I shrunk that down so we ended up with more of a boomerang shape."

THE FIRST DESIGN

Eaves also rejected some of the approaches because they looked a little too much like the Breen warships he had designed for the last season of *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*. Eventually, he had something that he had something that he thought showed promise so he inked it up, giving the design more detail.

At this point, he added an important element that would become a feature of Son'a design. "We had been to a music room where there was an open piano. I had looked inside at all the

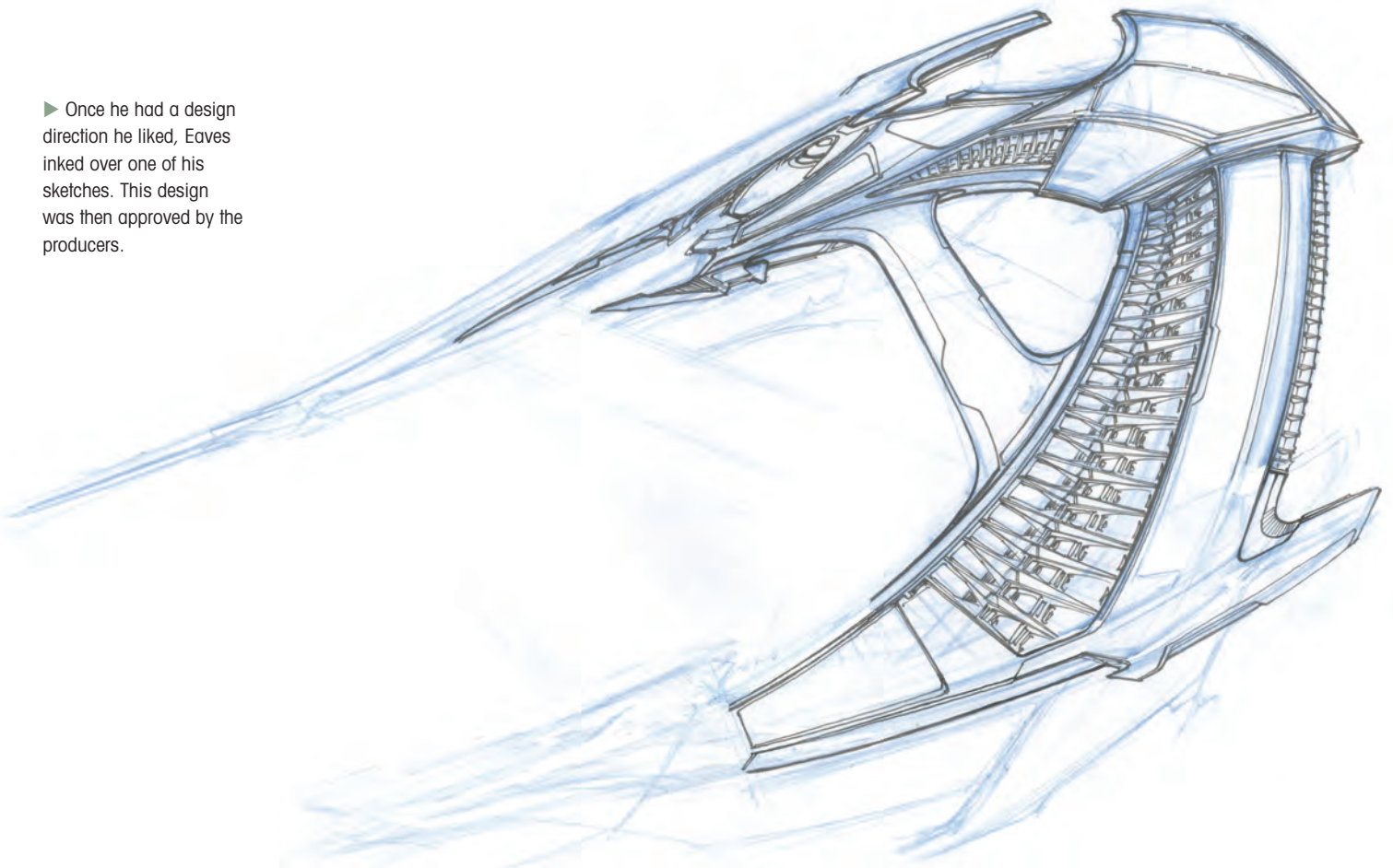
intricate strings and keys, and I thought it would be cool to incorporate that into the design of these ships-."

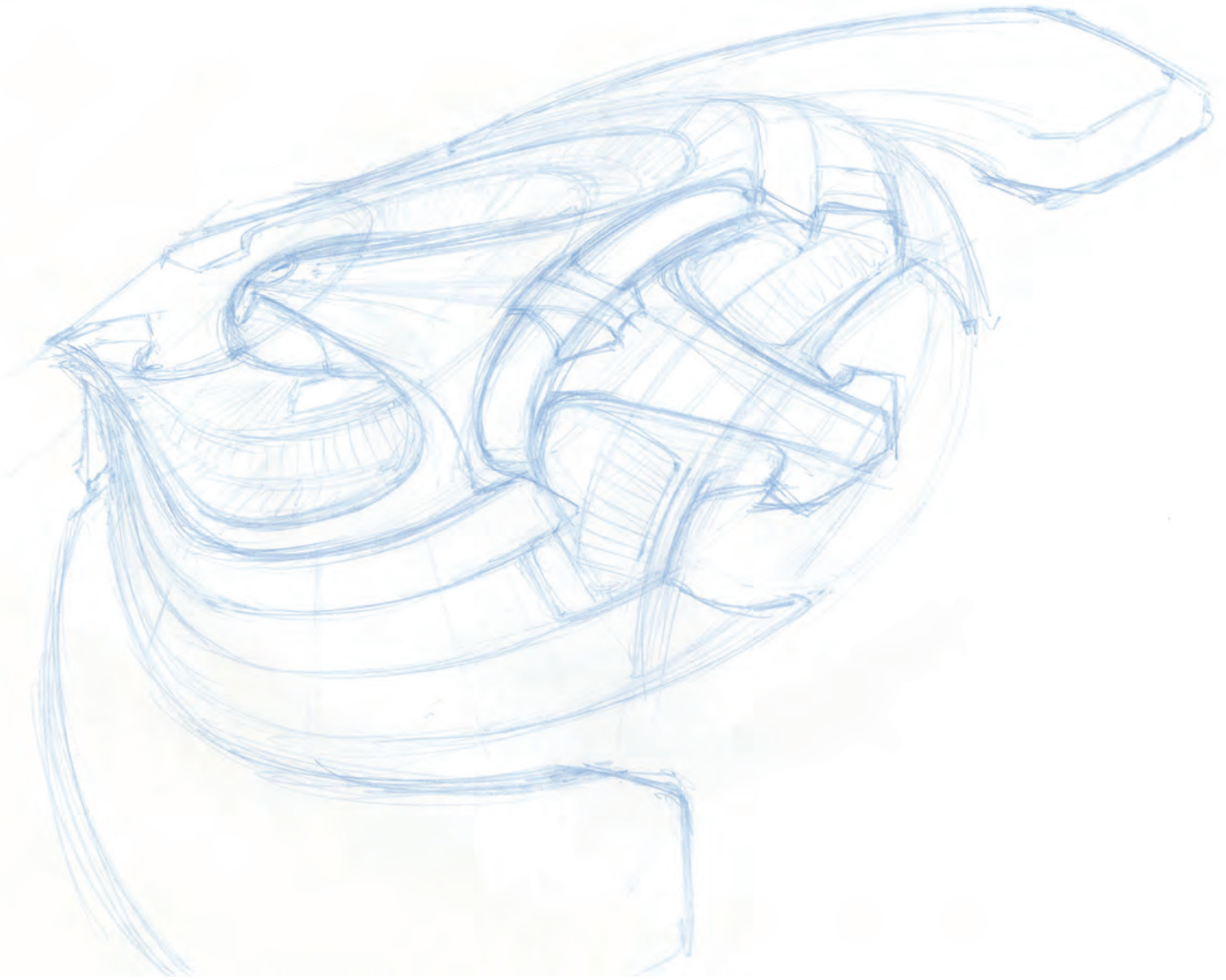
After years of working with producer Rick Berman, Eaves knew that he tended to respond well to designs that had echoes of one of *STAR TREK*'s most famous ships, the *Klingon bird-of-prey*. So the shape he worked up was clearly inspired by a horseshoe that had been bent in the middle so the sides formed wings.

Zimmerman took this drawing to the producers who approved it as the basic direction for the design, but as Eaves remembers, he wasn't that satisfied with it himself, "I wasn't happy with it. I was happy with some of the lines. I thought, 'I'll work on the boomerang idea for the battleship. I'll park this and work on Ru'afo's ship.'"

As Eaves started work on Ru'afo's flagship, he kept the same basic shape from the drawing that had been approved, but made the ship bulkier and more curved. "We made it rounder because

► Once he had a design direction he liked, Eaves inked over one of his sketches. This design was then approved by the producers.





that created a real nice contrast with the *Enterprise*," he says. "The Son'a weren't an overly aggressive race so we didn't want have to have lots of sharp angles. We wanted them to be militaristic without being aggressively militaristic. The organic approach fitted pretty well with that. At the same time, I was watching the costumes coming together and what Mike Okuda was doing with the graphics. They were going more organic, so I mimicked that with the exterior."

ROUND AND MUSCULAR

Although Eaves made the design rounder, it wasn't soft. Instead it was muscular with sharp pincers at the front. As he explains, this was a deliberate attempt to represent Ru'afo's personality. "We knew that Ru'afo was kind of an arrogant, headstrong guy so we thought, 'Let's make his ship

the most aggressive of the fleet,' so he got the angles and the bridge was higher than on any of the other designs because he sits above everyone else."

Eaves wasn't working on Ru'afo's ship in isolation: the Son'a ships were all being designed at the same time, and it was important that it looked as if they all had been created by the same species. "We were doing four ships at once," he explains. "We had the collector, the battleship, Ru'afo's flagship, and the shuttle that drops the drones. We were trying to tie everything together so there were elements that flowed back and forth between all the ships. There was a big fork on the top of the battleship that was reflected on the collector. We tried to make Ru'afo's ship similar but independent. The common trait between all the ships was the keyboard detailing."

▲ Eaves took the basic shape of his design and created a rounder and more muscular version, which he thought would suit the personality of the Son'a leader.

On Ru'afu's ship, Eaves took the musical idea even further. When he was adding detail to the design, he found various gaps that needed to be filled. He thought it would be a nice touch if the detail he added was inspired by other musical instruments. "There are harp strings in there and organ pipework. The little openings lent themselves to that. The whole thing is a giant flying instrument. Everything about it was kind of inspired by music. I didn't plan it, but the opportunity presented itself, and I thought it was fun to throw that in."

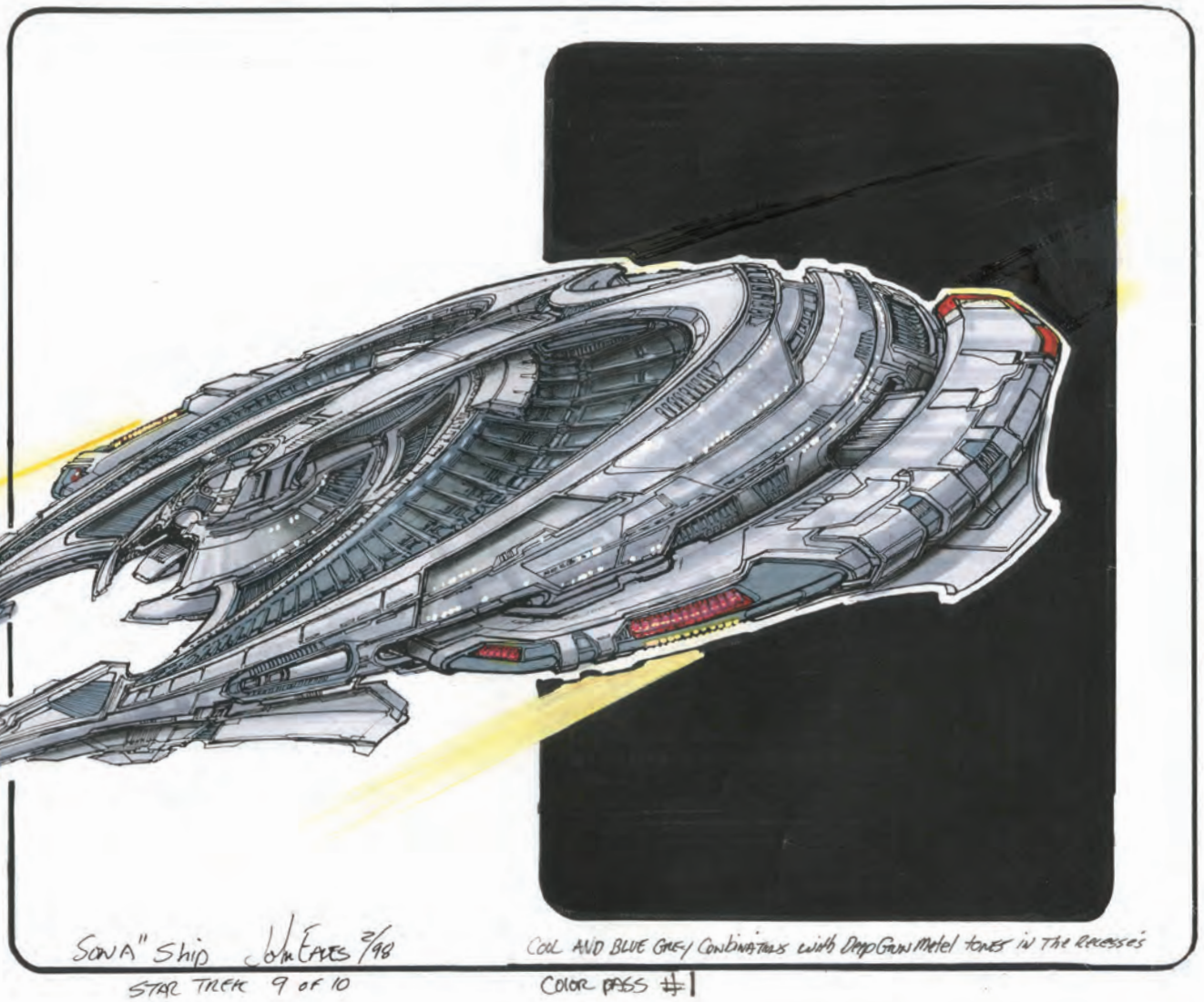
▼ This sketch shows the finished design of Ru'afu's ship. It was originally meant to fly from right to left, and Eaves added the energy trails after the VFX team decided it should fly the other way round.

When Zimmerman took Eaves's designs to the producers they were approved with remarkably few changes. The next stage was to send them over to the modelmakers. As Eaves explains, on *INSURRECTION* the process was very different to his experiences on *FIRST CONTACT* or on *DEEP SPACE NINE*.

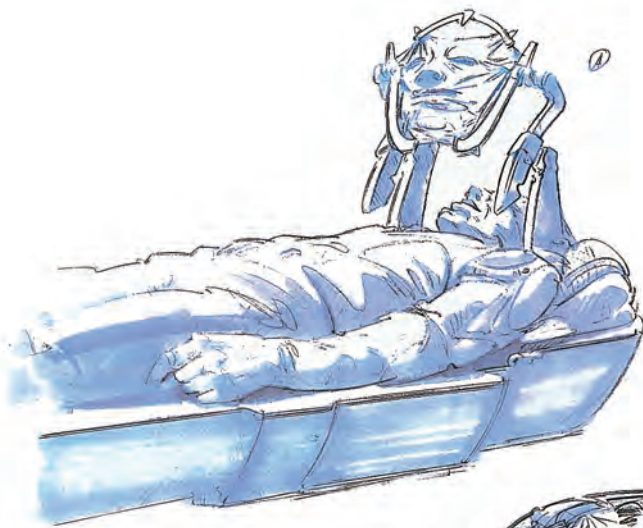
"This was going to be the first full CGI *STAR TREK* movie. Peter Lauritson was the producer in charge of effects. We were using Santa Barbara studios and Blue Sky/VIFX. There were miniatures made for that strafing scene at the end but everything else was CG. This was my first time working with CG guys, so I didn't know how they built the models or how they approached stuff.

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

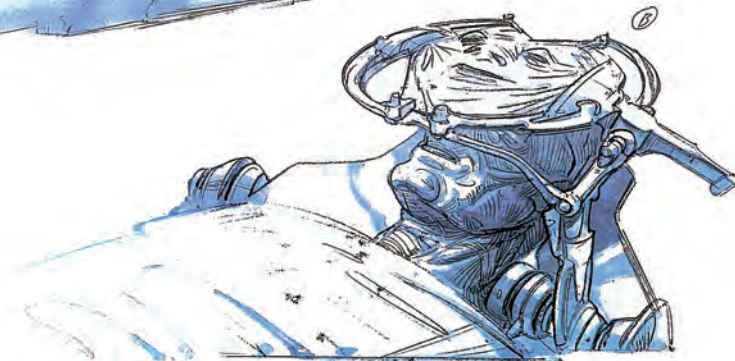
"If I was working with ILM or a traditional modelmaker like Greg Jein, I could just draw a three-quarter view. It wouldn't have to be accurate and I could leave a lot of it blank so that the model makers could be creative themselves. Santa Barbara wanted a lot of information on these ships. These guys were primarily used to doing organic and atmospheric work. This was their



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SOLID FACE STRUCTURE.

The interior of Ru'afo's ship called for two major sets: a bridge and a plastic surgery studio, where the Son'a would undergo face stretching procedures and Admiral Dougherty would meet his end.

For production designer Herman Zimmerman, the centerpiece of the surgery was the Son'a surgical bed. "The bed that our Admiral Dougherty gets murdered in - the face-stretching machine - is a difficult physical prop to make work right. It had to do a number of things and seem to do them automatically, when in fact it all had to be done by off-camera wires and lights. We needed more lead time than we actually had at our disposal. That was the one prop that, because of the schedule, we had to have early on. We made a number of trips, the property master and I, out to the company that was building it to check on the progress; we had to make sure it fit both the actors that had to use it. All of that

requires some careful attention, which it got." "We actually did take the skin off the face. When you first see Ru'afo, his face folds up around the nose and all the way up over his eyes, that whole flap of skin, is just being put

back on by two attendants. We were more able to do it on the drawing than we were in actuality, given the difficulty of that prop. What you see on screen is what we were able to make of that idea."

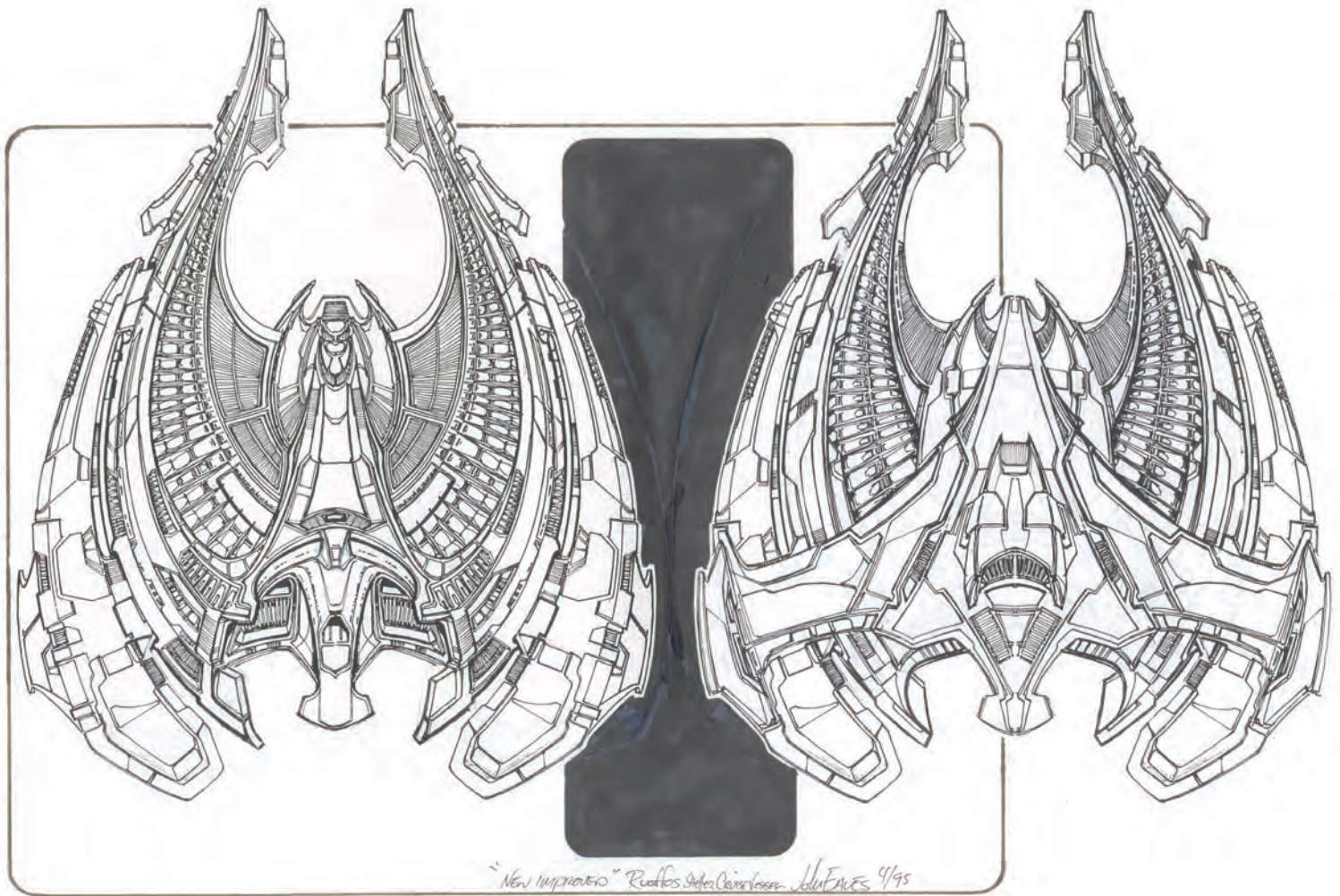


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SOLID BODY SCULPTURE



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▲▼ Eaves produced detailed plan views for the CG modellers who struggled with all the ship's compound curves.

first big project where they did ships as well. They would call up and say, 'Any information you can give us - whatever it is! More will be better than less!' They requested tighter views and plans and

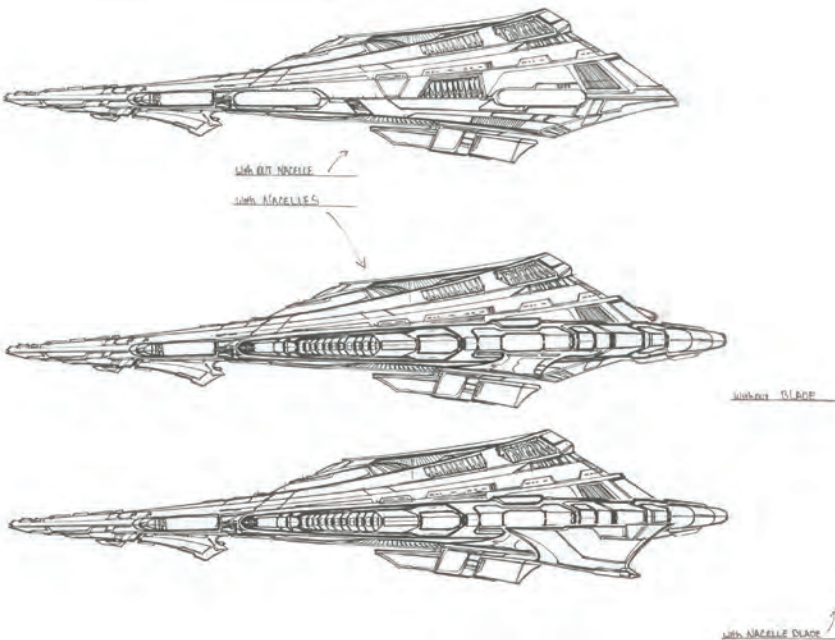
any visuals that could aid them."

As a result Eaves produced a series of detailed drawings showing Ru'afos's ship from above and below and from the side. He even produced a side view drawing that showed what the ship would look like without its "warp blades."

"I always think, 'If you had to build it practically, how would these things fit together?' I try to illustrate how things connect, and to show the layering. On Ru'afos's ship, the nacelles actually feed into the ship at two points; they float like very narrow catamaran pods. So I did a drawing for them showing it with and without them."

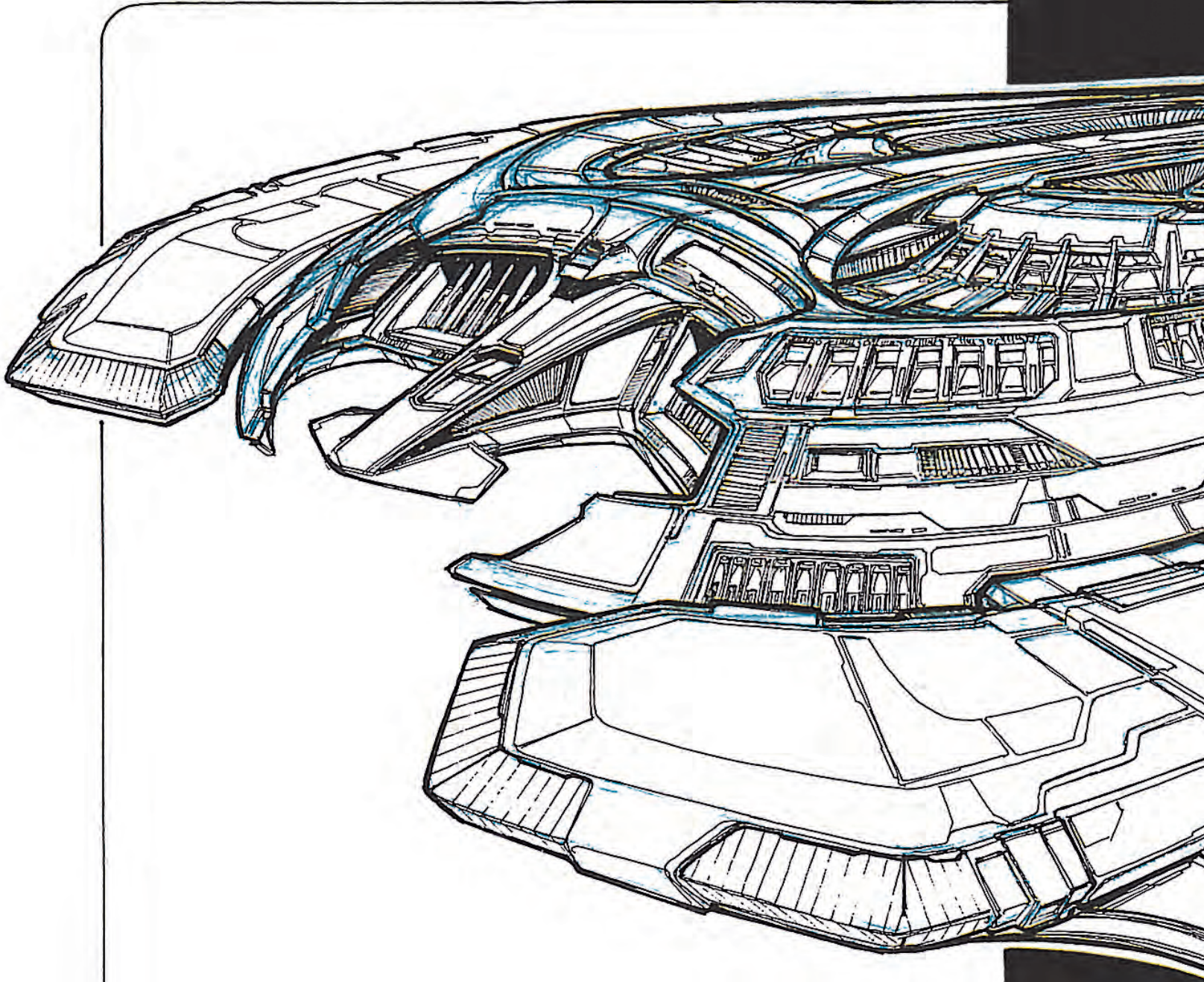
Eaves also supplied a detailed paint guide that called out the colors for the different parts of the ship. He thought that would be the end of his involvement with the design. Since they were armed with his detailed drawings, the team at Santa Barbara Studios didn't feel the need to ask any more questions and the approval process for the VFX models, didn't involve the art department.

"We'd see the rough models if we got over to





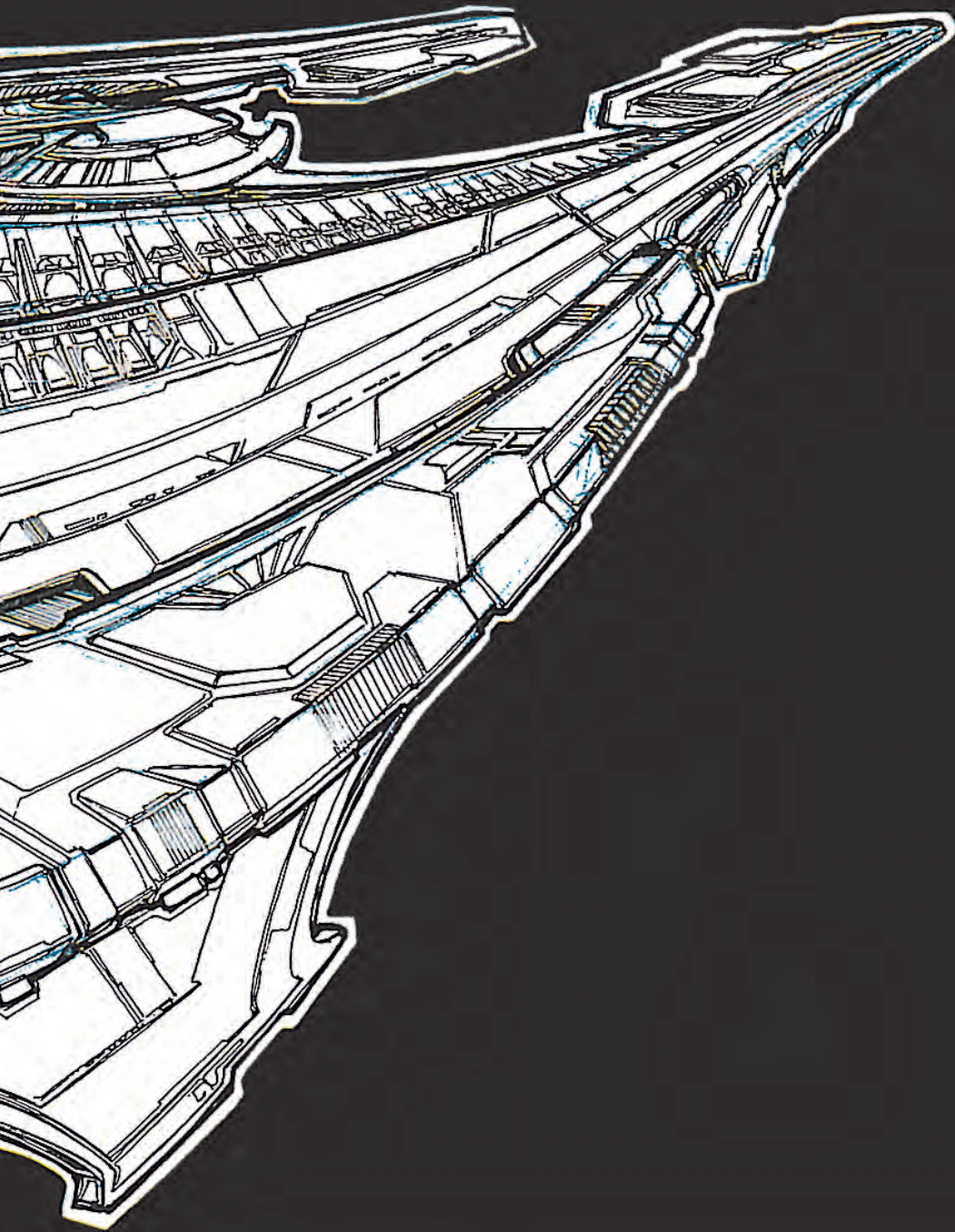
► These renders of the original Santa Barbara Studios model show the ship from the side, top and front.



STAR TREK IX Klingon ship

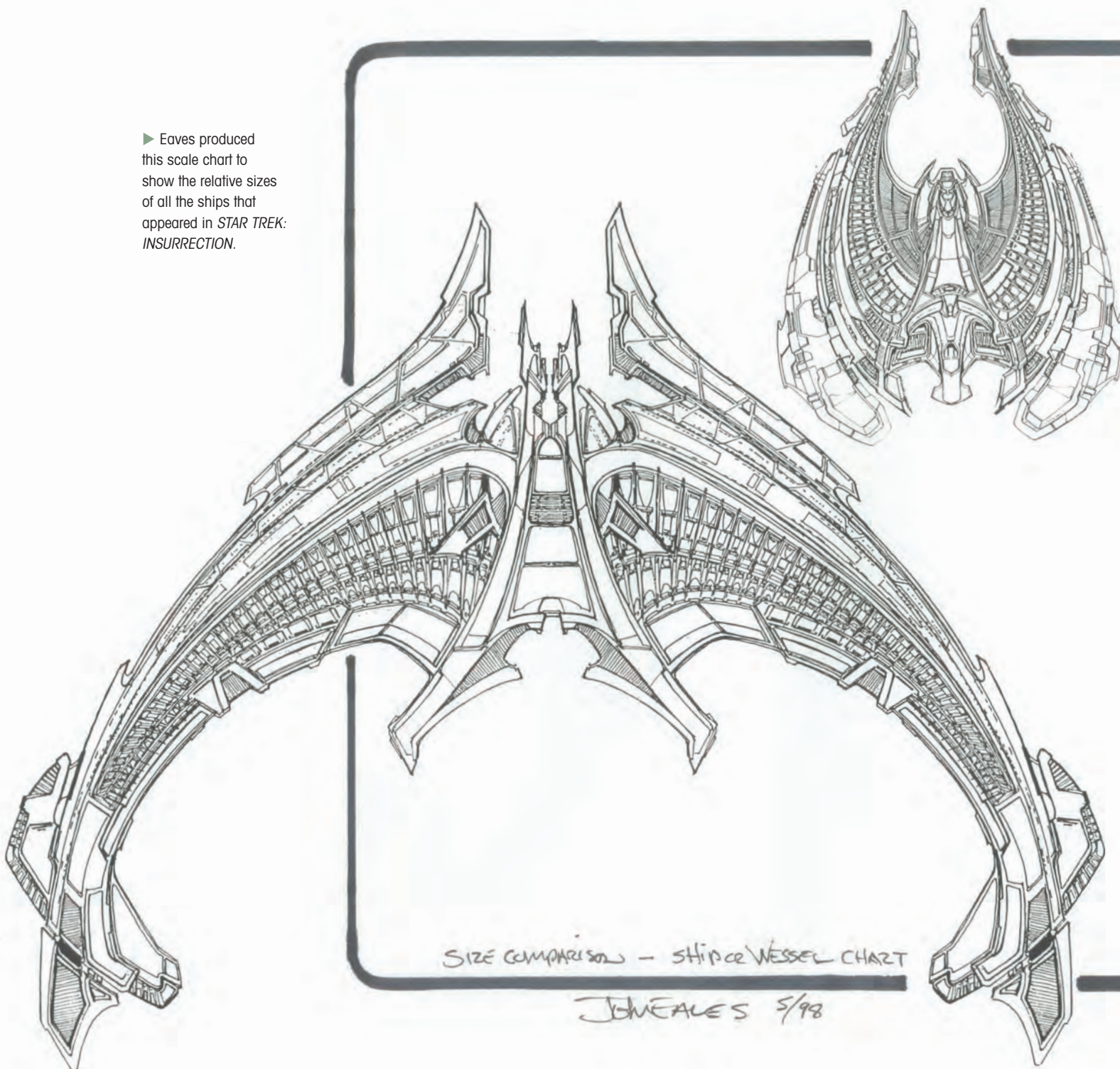
"the other side" 3/4 view

John Eaves 4/98



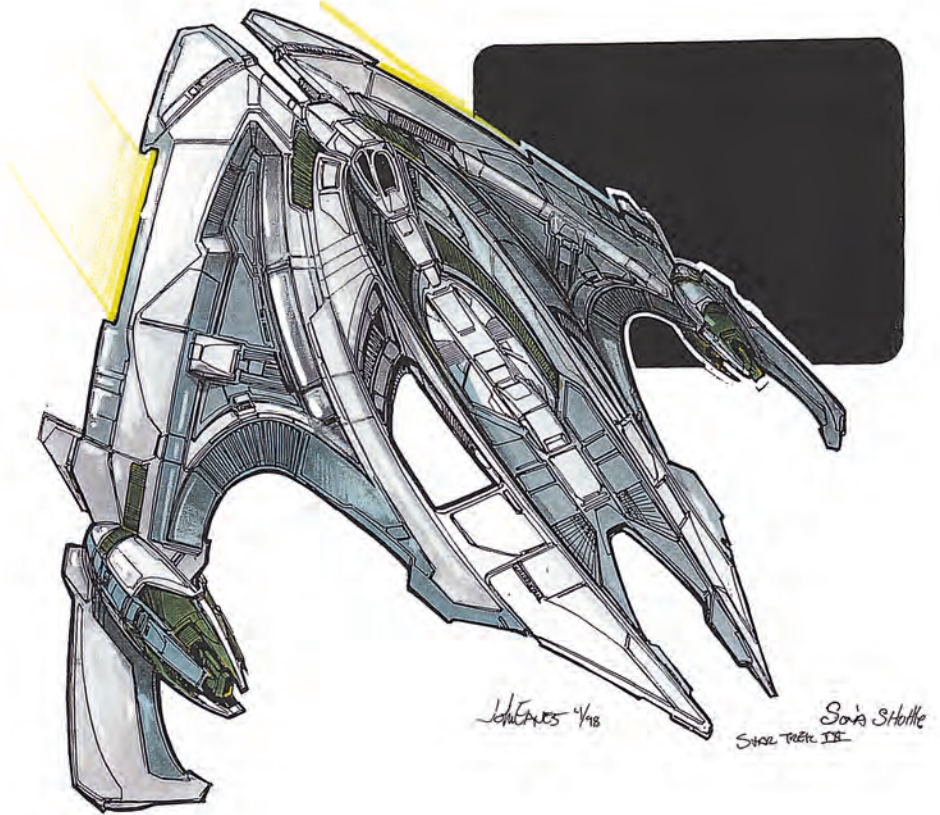
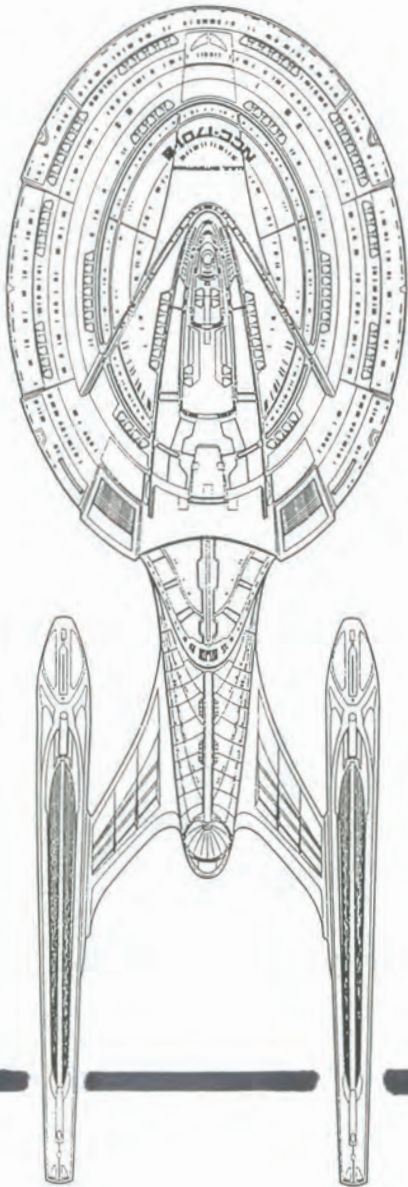
◀ This drawing was meant to show the ship from behind, but VFX producer Peter Lauritson thought it made sense for the shoulders to fly forward. If you look closely at the details at the back, you can see harp strings and the pipework from an organ.

► Eaves produced this scale chart to show the relative sizes of all the ships that appeared in *STAR TREK: INSURRECTION*.



see dailies, which was not that often,” Eaves remembers. “The first time we saw Ru’afu’s ship it was flying the wrong way round! I had always meant it to fly forwards, but when I sent it over to VFX, I forgot to indicate that on the drawing. I ran over to Peter’s office and said, ‘Hey, it’s flying the wrong way!’ He goes, ‘I thought it looked better the other way.’”

There were some implications to the changes the VFX team had made. Eaves had designed the ship with the impulse engines at the back, and most importantly instead of facing forward, the bridge was now nestled in the rear of the ship. But there were costs involved in changing things at this point. “It had been going the wrong direction for quite a while before we found out!” Eaves



had to be reversed, Eaves revisited the design to make some subtle changes. “We had to rework the engines so they worked the other way around so the Bussard collectors became the warp engines. Luckily, they never did a shot showing the view from the bridge window.”

Since that day, Eaves has added arrows to his designs showing which way they are meant to fly. Another problem that came up was that the ships seemed to be changing size from shot to shot, so Eaves produced scale charts showing the relative size of all the different ships in *INSURRECTION*. Ru’afu’s ship scaled out to 1,160 feet long.

The finished models only appeared in the movie. The film wrapped up the Son’ a’s story so they never appeared again. The CG models themselves were never passed over to the VFX team at Paramount. Even if they had been, they would have required some conversion since Santa Barbara Studios used proprietary software plugins that weren’t available elsewhere. As a result, the Son’ a ships are an unusual tangent in the *STAR TREK* universe: a series of significant designs that only appeared once.

▲ Eaves returned to the original sketch that had been approved and used it for the Son’ a shuttle.

remembers, “They had already done a couple of finished opticals by that point. I fought for redoing them so it went the more aggressive way. They understood me, but it was a pretty heavy discussion and eventually we decided to leave it as it was. If you don’t know you couldn’t tell, but I still feel that it’s going backwards!”

Knowing that the direction the ship was flying in

STAR TREK™

