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# STAR TREK™

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SON'A  
**COLLECTOR**  
SPECIAL ISSUE

SCIENCE VESSEL

ACTIVE: 2375

AFFILIATION: SON'A

RADIATION COLLECTOR

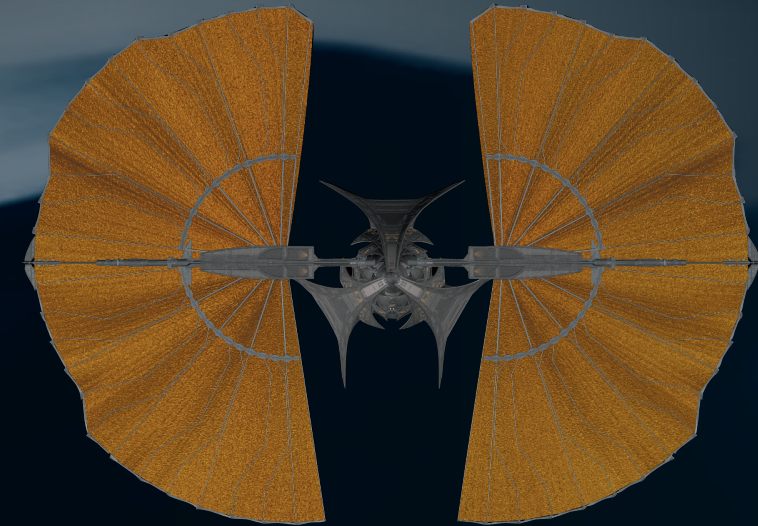
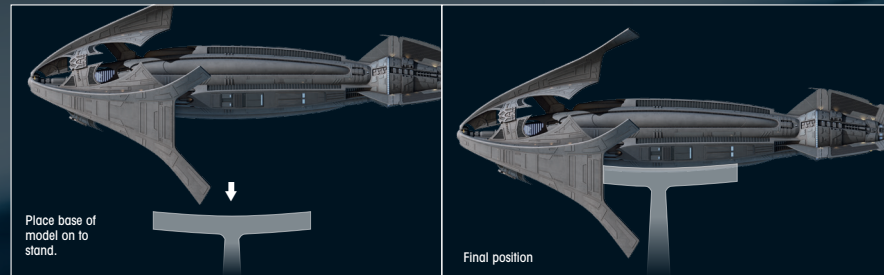
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06: DESIGNING THE SHIP

## SON'A COLLECTOR SPECIFICATION

### Stand assembly:



TYPE:	SCIENCE VESSEL
OPERATED BY:	THE SON'A
FUNCTION:	METAPHASIC RADIATION COLLECTION
DESTROYED:	2375



SON'A  
COLLECTOR

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◀ The Son'a collector was created as part of a conspiracy between the Son'a, led by Ru'af, and rogue elements within Starfleet. Their goal was to collect metaphasic radiation that reversed the aging process.

**T**he Son'a collector, or science vessel, was designed with the sole purpose of collecting metaphasic radiation from the Ba'ku planet in the region of space known as the Briar Patch. It was a massive vessel, with a hollow interior that could store the particles it harvested.

The collection process was started when the collector deployed huge sails that were built into the side of the ship. Once these were in position, it would vent the cryogenic tanks and fire the injector assembly at the end of the ship into the rings around the Ba'ku planet. This would cause a thermolytic reaction which would leave the planet uninhabitable for generations. The reaction was dangerous so the nearby Son'a ships were protected by shielding. The collector itself was unmanned.

Captain Picard and the crew of the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-E prevented the collector from being deployed in 2375. When Picard realized what the Son'a were planning, he beamed on to the collector and activated the self-destruct system manually, just managing to beam out at the last moment.

## SON'A COLLECTOR

The Son'a collector was a massive vessel that was designed to gather metaphasic particles.

## Designing the **SON'A COLLECTOR**

The Son'a collector was a strange ship that posed concept artist John Eaves with some unusual challenges.

**T**he story of *STAR TREK: INSURRECTION* revolves around the Son'a's attempt to collect regenerative metaphasic particles from the rings around the Ba'ku planet. They plan to use a giant collector ship to harvest the radiation. The process starts with it unfurling sails that will capture the particles, before it fires an injector into the rings, which sets off a chain reaction.

The task of designing the Son'a collector, also known as the Son'a science vessel, fell to concept artist John Eaves. At the time, he and his boss, production designer Herman Zimmerman, were splitting their time between *DEEP SPACE NINE* and *INSURRECTION*.

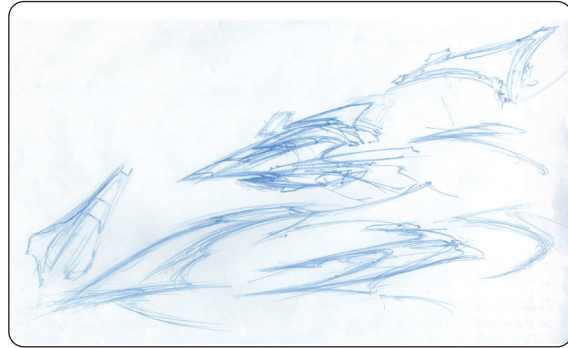
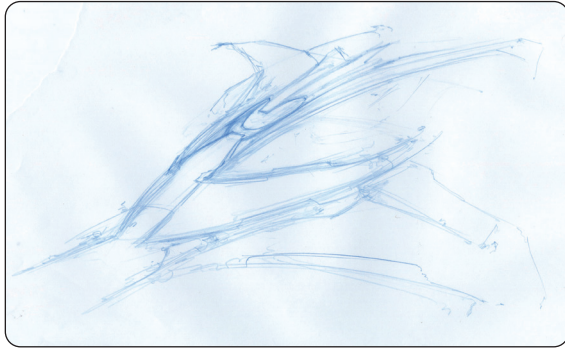
As Eaves explains, he had already started work on the other Son'a ships before the

▲ The collector had to collect vast amounts of radiation from the rings around the Ba'ku planet. The sails harvested the radiation while the body stored it.

collector came up, so he had sketched out some basic concepts for the battle ship and Ru'afo's flagship. "We took those elements and tried to make something different" he says, "something grander."

The design of the ship would inevitably be influenced by what the collector had to do in the course of the film. As Eaves remembers, it

had to collect radiation from the rings around an entire planet, which implied that it should be an enormous vessel. "We knew there was going to be a heist of the Ba'ku atmosphere. Given what the collector needed to do, we drew it on a vast scale. It was just enormous. It collects all the radiation from the planet's rings and it needed somewhere to house it, so we started



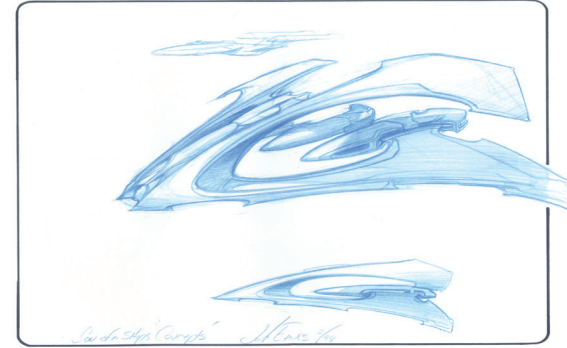
with something gargantuan."

Eaves rapidly produced a series of loose sketches, one of which showed a triangular shape that was reminiscent of the crest on a dragon's head. Zimmerman thought this was a promising approach, so he took it to the producers who approved the basic direction. Eaves wasn't entirely convinced though. "I did a piece the producers really liked. It was very

elegant. We hadn't really done anything like that before, but I didn't think it looked like anything special."

#### ADDED DEPTH

He remembers he was concerned that all the designs for the Son'a ships were coming out very flat and he was worried that the collector could go the same way. His solution was to



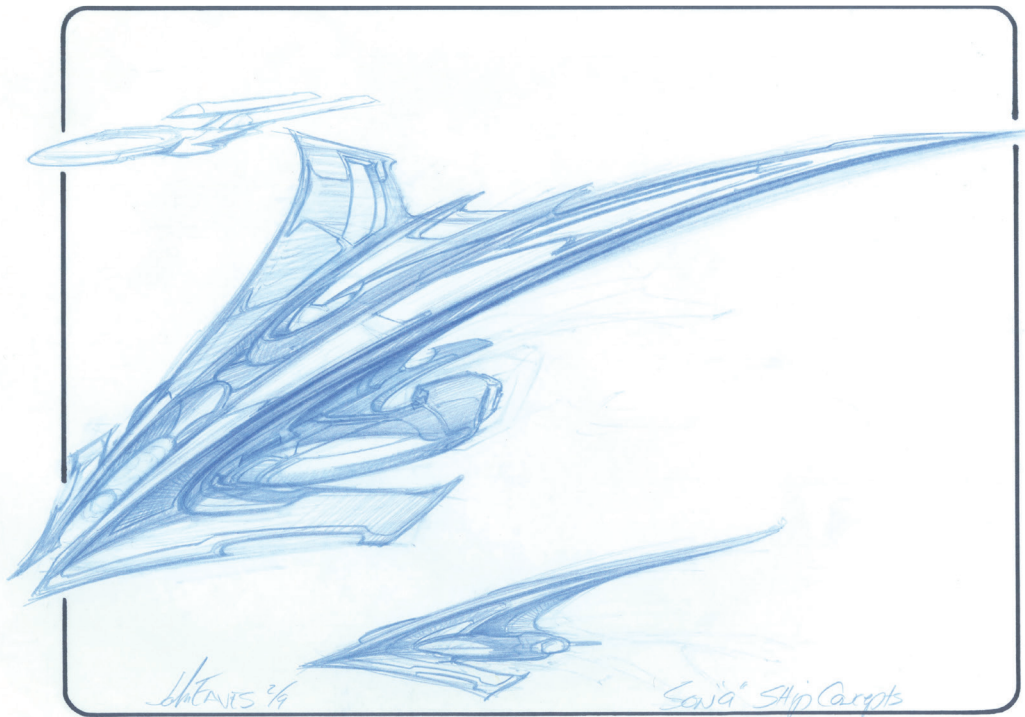
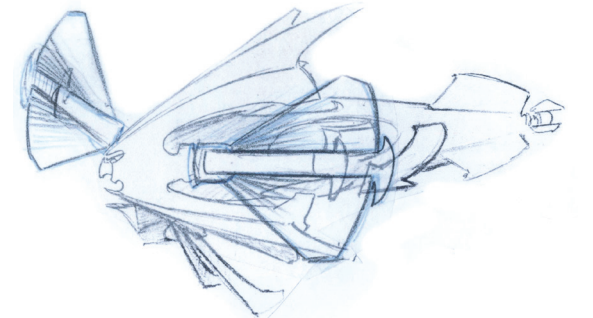
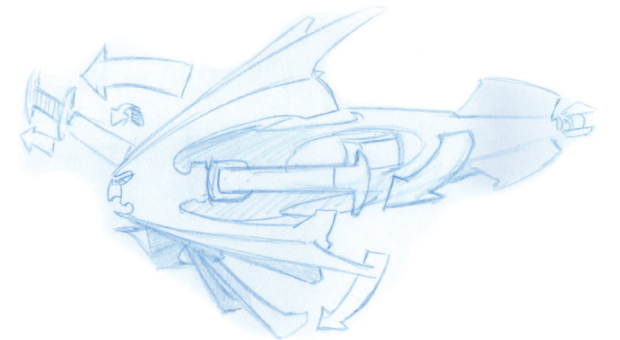
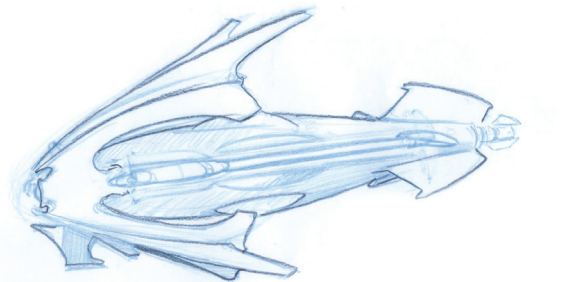
suggest taking the initial design and multiplying and rotating it so it became three identical leaves that formed a new, domed shape.

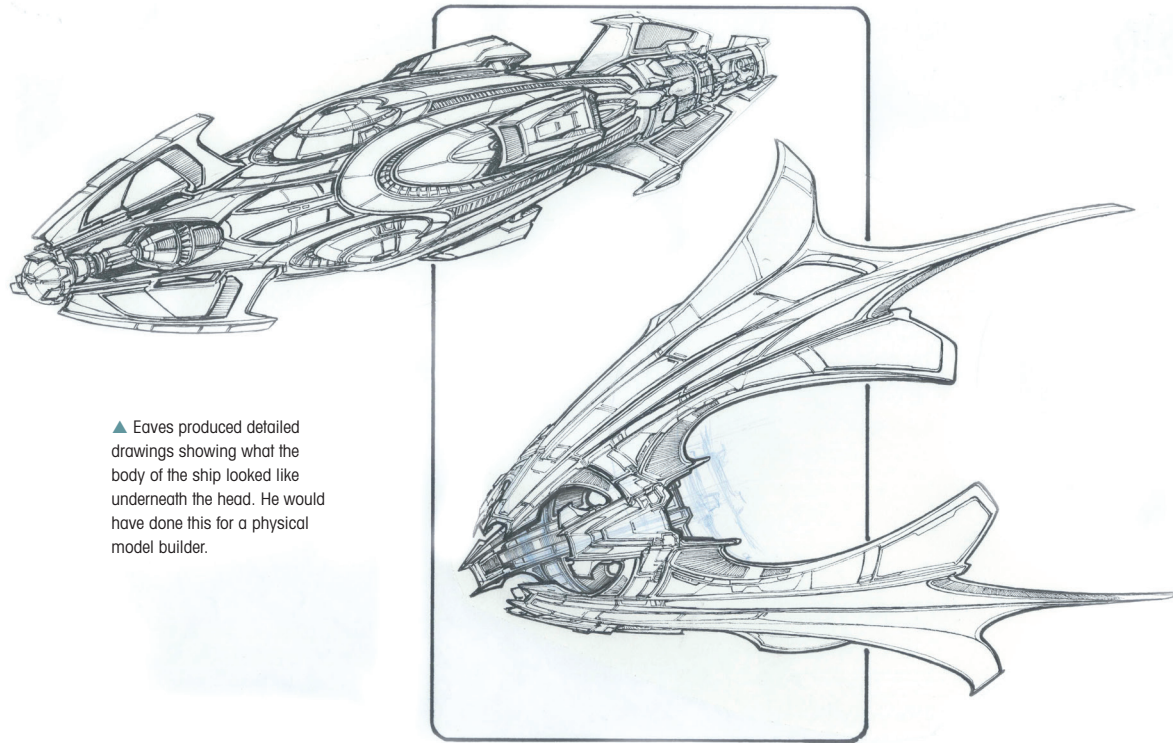
"I was kind of on a three-part kick at the time. We'd done the Vulcan lander, which was built around three parts, so I said to Herman, 'What do you say we make it into a three-piece thing?'"

Zimmerman agreed. He also wanted to emphasize that unlike the other Son'a ships, the collector wasn't designed for battle, so he asked Eaves to soften the shapes. "We didn't want it to be a battle ship," Eaves recalls. "It had a different function so Herman wanted to make it look less aggressive. On the next drawings the shapes are rounded, which gave it a friendlier architectural feel. When you look at the original drawing, it had a bit of aggression to it. Making it into three turned it into a kind of badminton birdy thing. It was still in the dangerous world, but it wasn't as aggressive."

Eaves only noticed the head's similarity to a badminton shuttlecock after he had designed it, but, as he explains, it was very much in keeping with what he was doing with the rest of the Son'a fleet. "The other Son'a ships were deliberately based on yard toys. The Son'a fighter is basically a lawn dart, the battleship is a boomerang, and Ru'af'o's ship is a horseshoe.

► Eaves took the initial shape and multiplied it to make a three-part head. The producers added a long body, that could be used for a massive action sequence, and the idea that the ship would have physical wings that were deployed from blades.





▲ Eaves produced detailed drawings showing what the body of the ship looked like underneath the head. He would have done this for a physical model builder.

That was intentional, but it was just a coincidence that this one turned out looking like a badminton birdie."

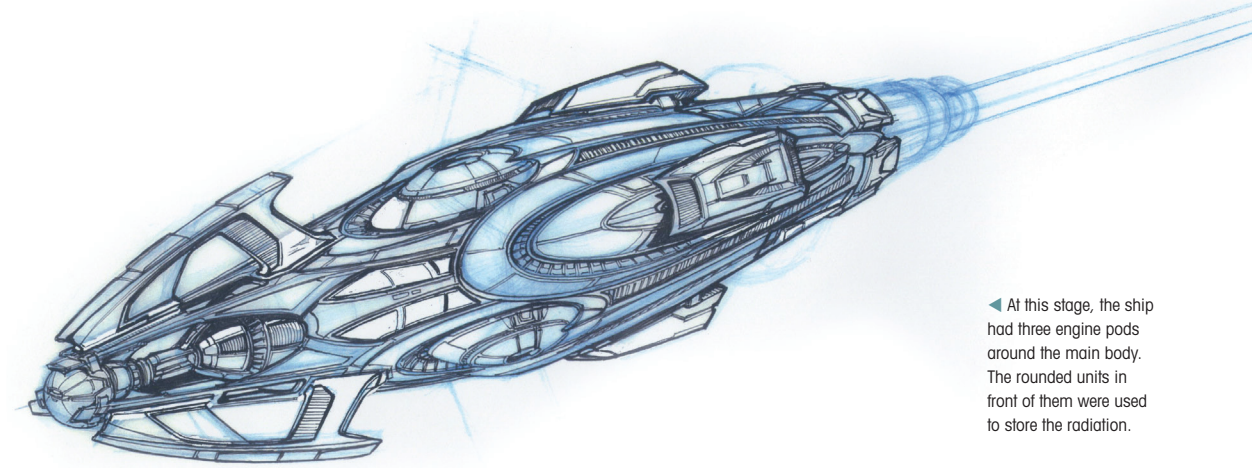
Around the same time, discussions were moving forward about how the collector would do its job of gathering radiation. Originally, the idea was that it would simply fire a beam into the rings around the Ba'ku planet. "They were still discussing how that would work," Eaves remembers. "In the beginning it wasn't a physical device. We thought it was going to be an optical effect, kind of like a forcefield, so I didn't design anything mechanical. The ship would have been this framework that would have generated a beautiful visual effect around it as it collected the radiation."

While Eaves was reworking the basic shape, he got a message saying that the collector should have physical wings that would open up to collect the radiation. "As the story progressed," he says, "they decided they were

going to add these gigantic mechanical wings."

By good fortune, the three-part head Eaves was working on provided obvious spaces for the wings to occupy, and he found inspiration for the wings right in front of him. "By accident the birdie shape gave us all the space we needed to add the things they wanted. My friend Tony, who sat across from me, had a drafting machine at his desk. I mimicked the T-square from that for the blades of the arms. When the collector opened, the blades would rotate and open up like giant Japanese fans."

There was something about the combination of the three-leaved head with the twin wings that really appealed to Eaves. "It was kind of cool because the three-part design of the head was balanced, but when you had two wings you had a kind of asymmetry going on. It was a nice mixture. There were all these things at play, where you had all these different layers that



◀ At this stage, the ship had three engine pods around the main body. The rounded units in front of them were used to store the radiation.

broke it up so it wasn't just repeating itself."

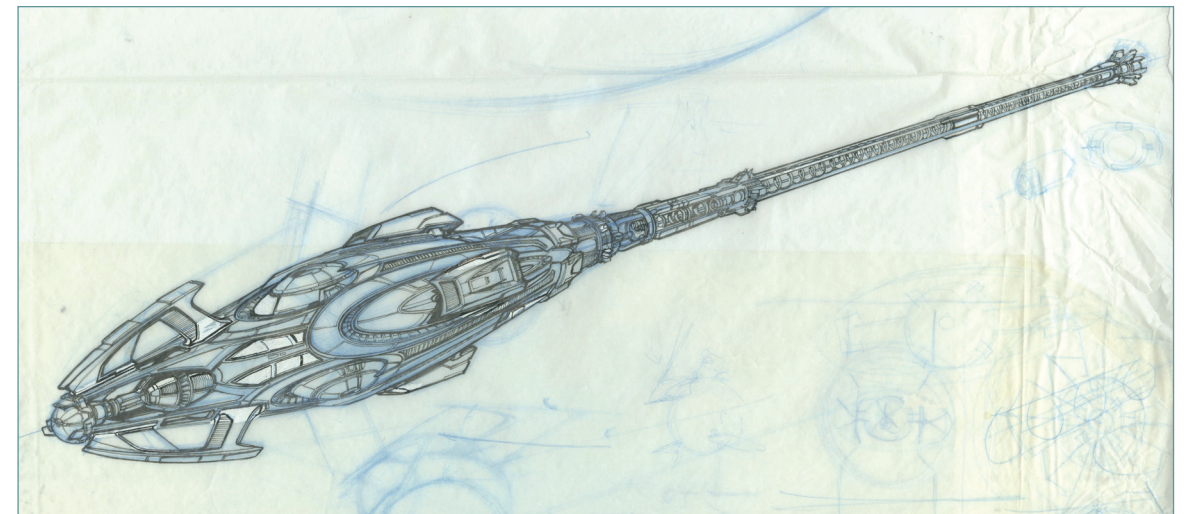
The producers had another request that had a major impact on the design. A lot of the action was going to take place inside the ship where Picard was fighting Ru'afo. They had the idea that the body of the collector would form a massive corridor that they could fight their way through. "The inside," Eaves explains, "was an enormously long corridor that they were going to build on stage. They wanted a visual where you would look down from the one end of the ship to the other. I did a sketch showing how that fit into the exterior - you can see from

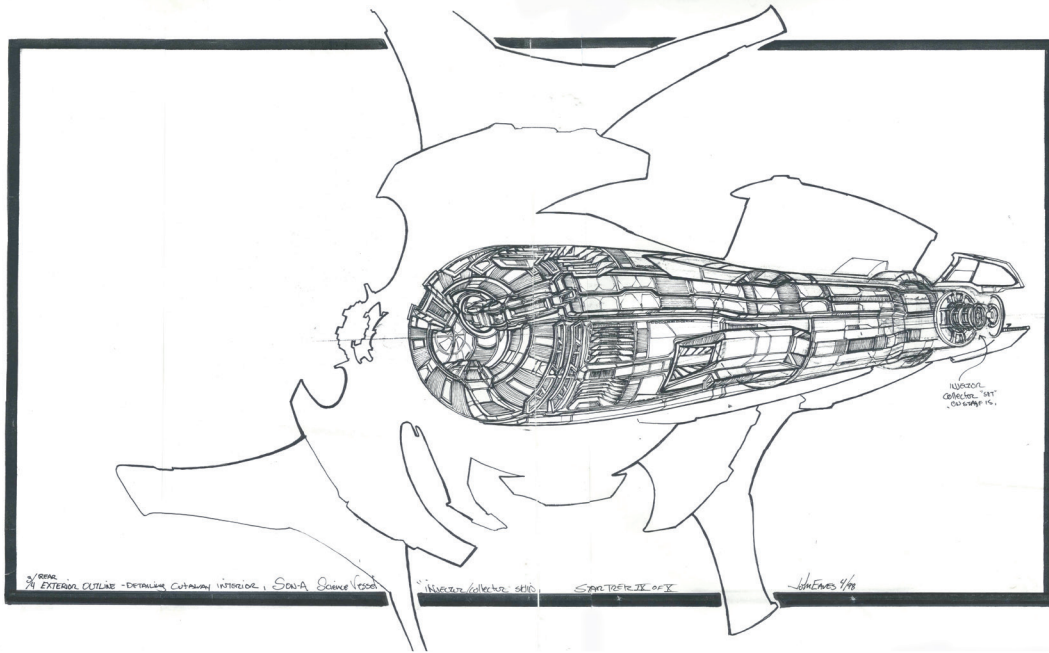
the front of the ship all the way to the back. It was almost an eternal corridor. There were ribs and blades."

In the action sequence, Picard would have been desperately trying to stop Ru'afo as he activated the collector. As Eaves explains, the framework of the corridor was open so that you would be able to see the arms opening during the battle. "From the inside you would be able to see this giant, mechanical umbrella folding out of the side of the ship. It was supposed to be like a skeleton so you could see everything."

The idea was rejected on the grounds of cost

▼ At one point the producers considered making the corridor that ran through the ship even longer, so Eaves produced this concept, which was swiftly rejected.





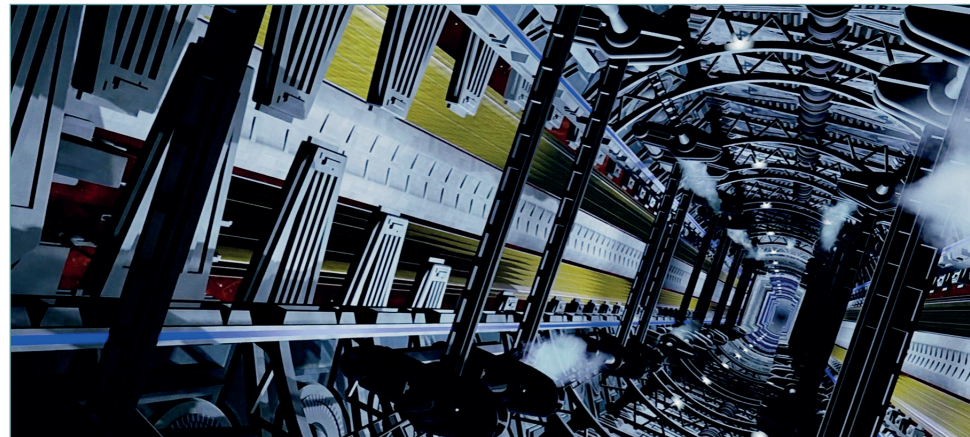
▲ This drawing shows that a massive corridor ran through the body of the ship before reaching the injector at the rear.

since it would have involved an enormous amount of bluescreen work and extensive visual effects shots. "Back then," Eaves recalls, "the *STAR TREK* movie budgets were not very big."

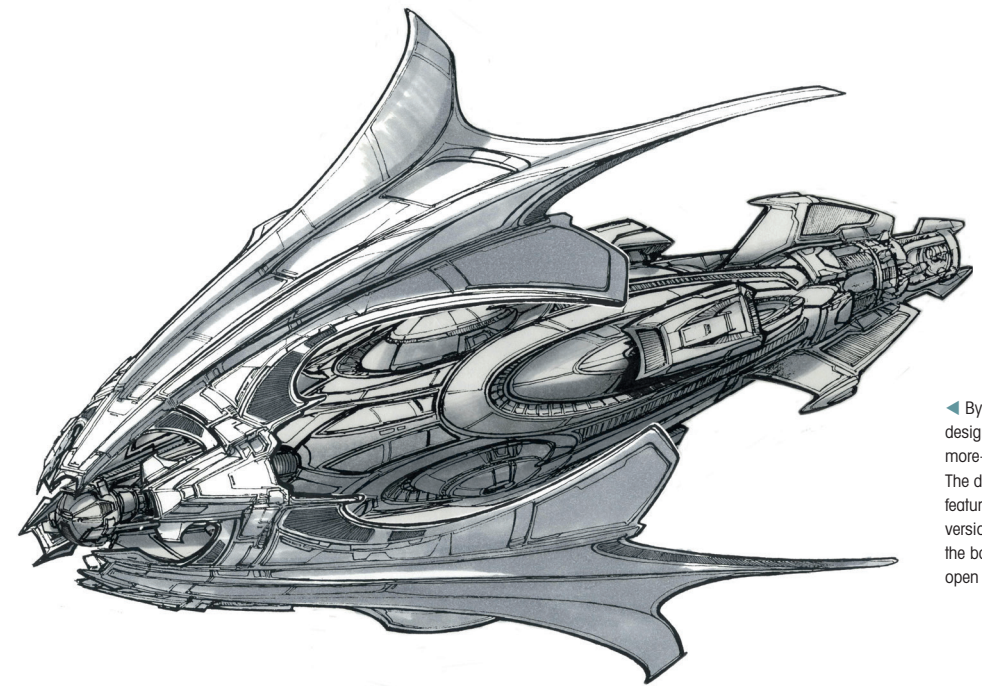
Eaves made the exterior of the ship curved and added all the elements that the *STAR TREK* audience would expect to see. He put three engine pods around the main body. "But," he says, "they went away because they didn't

want to have such an obvious engine shape. We put them on the back side of the blades on the head at the front instead." Eaves also added a tiny nod to the *Discovery* from '2001', by adding a small sphere at the front of the ship.

The story also called for the corridor to end in an injector pod that would be fired into the planet's rings. "There was a little pod at the back," Eaves remembers, "In the early versions



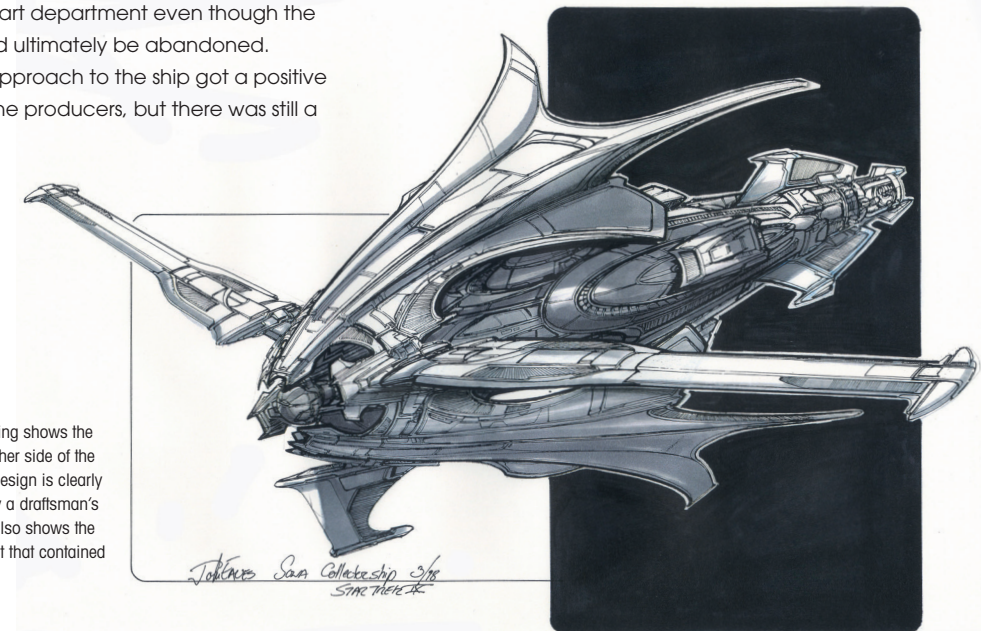
► At one point the plan was to show the wings opening from the inside of the ship, while Picard and Ru'afu fought. In the end there was a single shot showing the wings being deployed without any live action elements.



◀ By this stage the design of the head was more-or-less finalized. The drawing also features the smaller version of the injector at the back, which has an open framework.

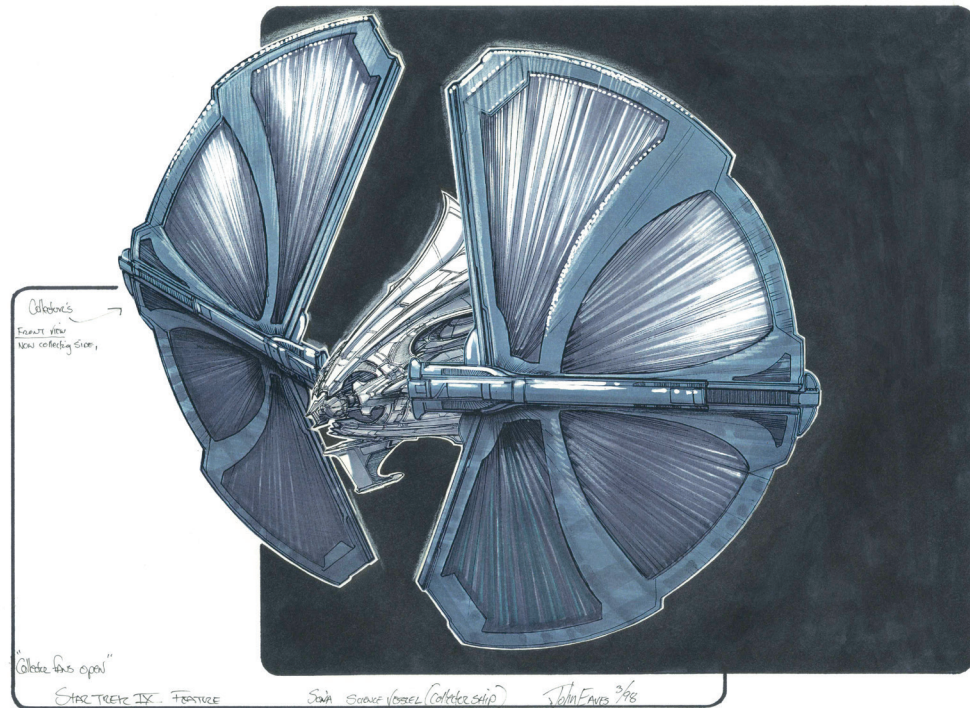
of the story, Ru'afu got trapped there. When things went wrong and he is fired into the rings he reversed in age and became a baby and then nothing." The pod can be seen in Eaves' earliest drawings, and he says, it received a lot of attention in the art department even though the sequence would ultimately be abandoned.

The overall approach to the ship got a positive response from the producers, but there was still a



► This drawing shows the blades on either side of the head. Their design is clearly influenced by a draftsman's T-square. It also shows the fin at the front that contained the bridge.

► The idea was that the blades would rotate through 90 degrees and the sails would open up like a fan.

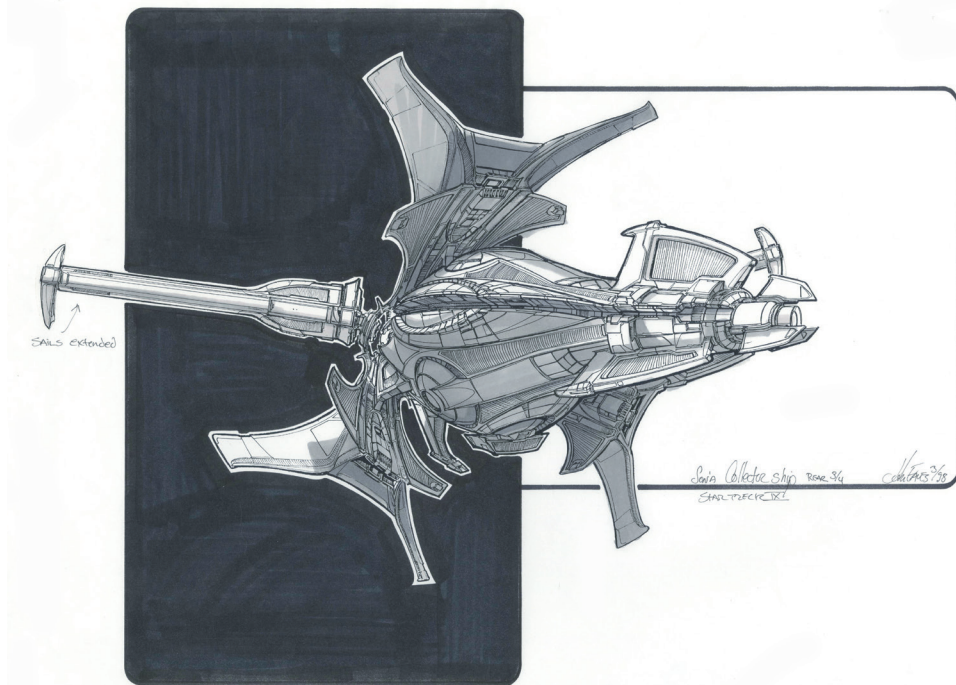
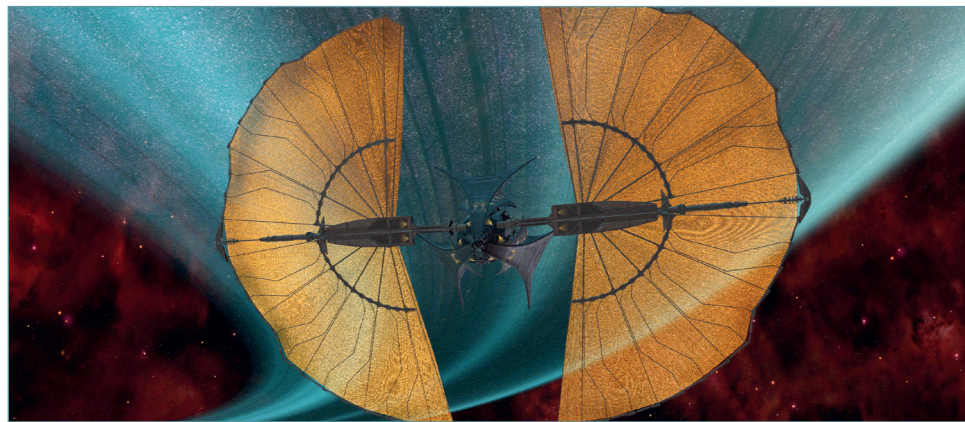


lot of work to do on the details. On the next round of drawings the producers asked the art department to make the corridor that ran through the ship even longer. Eaves did this by extending the 'tail' of the ship, creating a design that looked like a tadpole. "We got a note saying can we make that corridor even longer. That was a way to do it without changing the shape of the ship because they

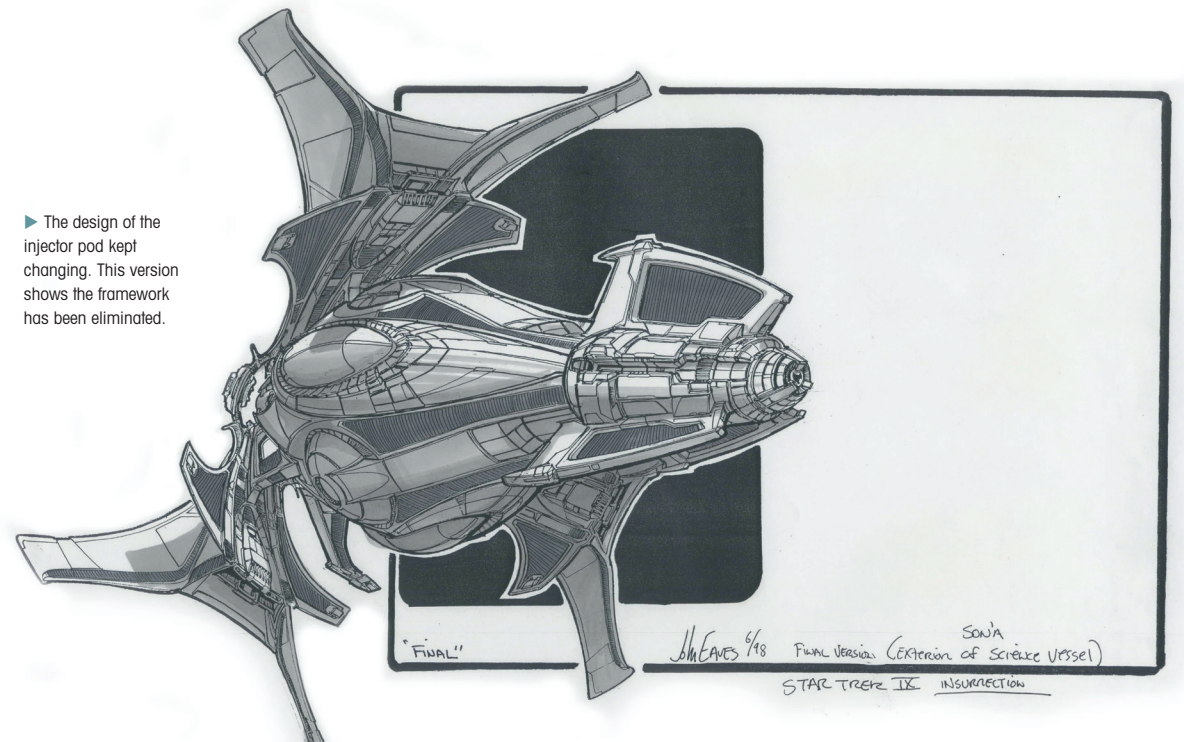
liked that. We figured if we did it like this we could go as far back as we wanted. The sketch went to a meeting and came back with a "No!"

Everyone had agreed that the collector would deploy the sails from blades alongside the head, but it wasn't clear what would happen to the blades when they weren't in use. Eaves briefly experimented with the idea that

► Seen in close up, the sails looked like a form of chain mail. Their movement was created in a special piece of software called 'Cloth.'

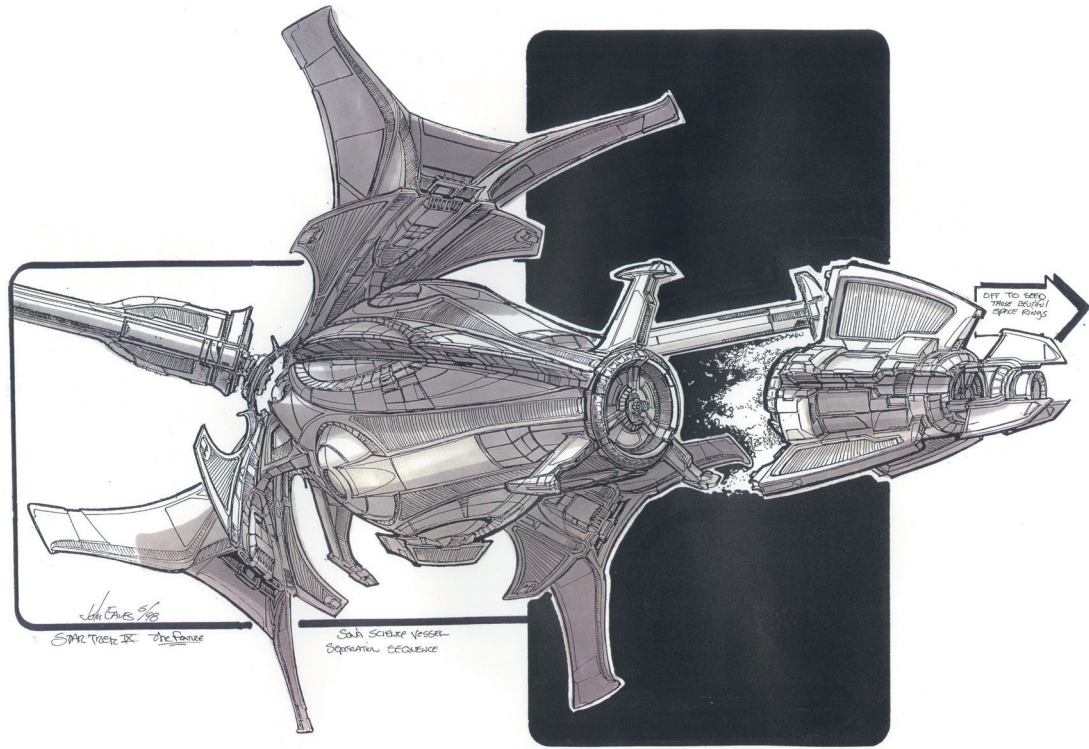


► Eventually, it was decided that the blades would fold back into the body of ship, so Eaves created a "canyon" that could house them.



► The design of the injector pod kept changing. This version shows the framework has been eliminated.



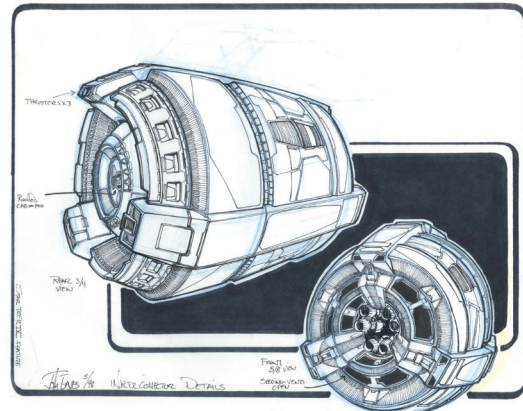
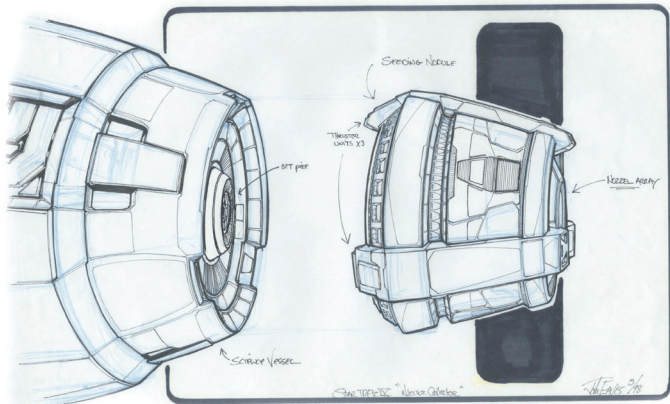


▲▼ In the film's original ending Ru'af'o was in the pod when it was ejected, but the size and design of the pod's exterior kept changing.

there would actually be three arms rather than two, but this was rapidly abandoned. Eventually, the decision was taken that the blades would be concealed in the body of the ship, so he carved out a "canyon" that could house them.

One detail that had been missing from the ship was an obvious bridge. On the next set of

drawings Eaves addressed this by adding a small fin that resembled a rudder that hung down from the front of the ship. "The bottom piece was going to be the bridge. At one stage they had to climb down there to activate the collection sequence where there would be a battle. In the final film that takes place in the center of the ship."



▲ A large section of the injector pod was built on the sound stage. The bluescreen was going to be replaced with visual effects showing the space outside, but this proved too expensive.

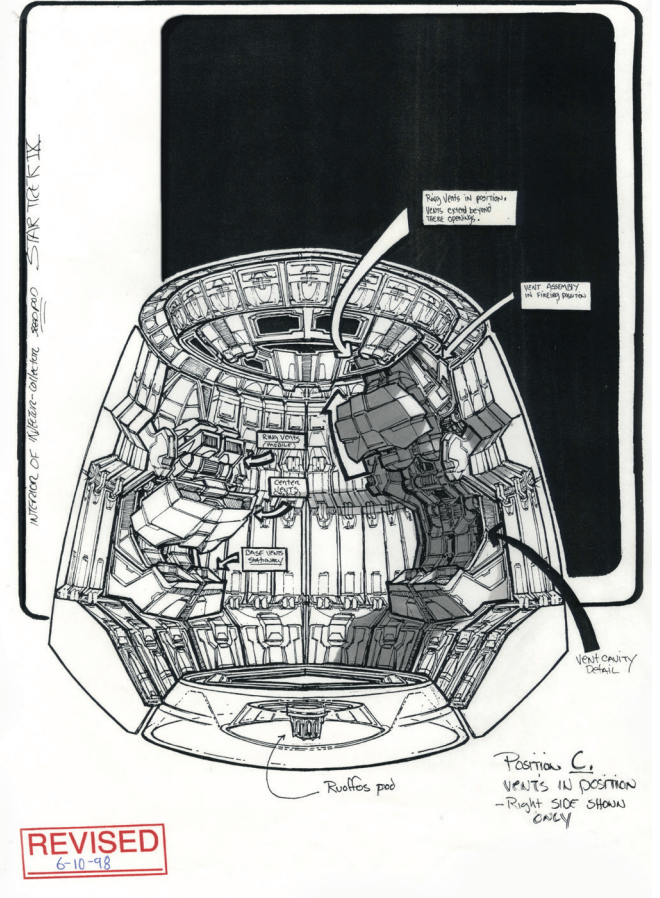
**FINAL TOUCH**

The fin with the bridge survived through several more rounds of drawings before it was eliminated. The battle that started there would have ended at the opposite end of the ship in the injector.

"The injector pod went through a lot of changes," Eaves remembers. "At first it was going to be this entire giant section at the back. There was a little window at the end which was where Ru'af'o would stand. That whole piece was going to separate, but they decided that was too big, so we funneled it down so it became a smaller piece. It's still enormous but it's pretty small relative to the ship. The size went back and forth."

The exterior needed to stay consistent with the set that was being built, so when the pod changed size, Eaves simply created a smaller version which mimicked the shape of the larger section at the end.

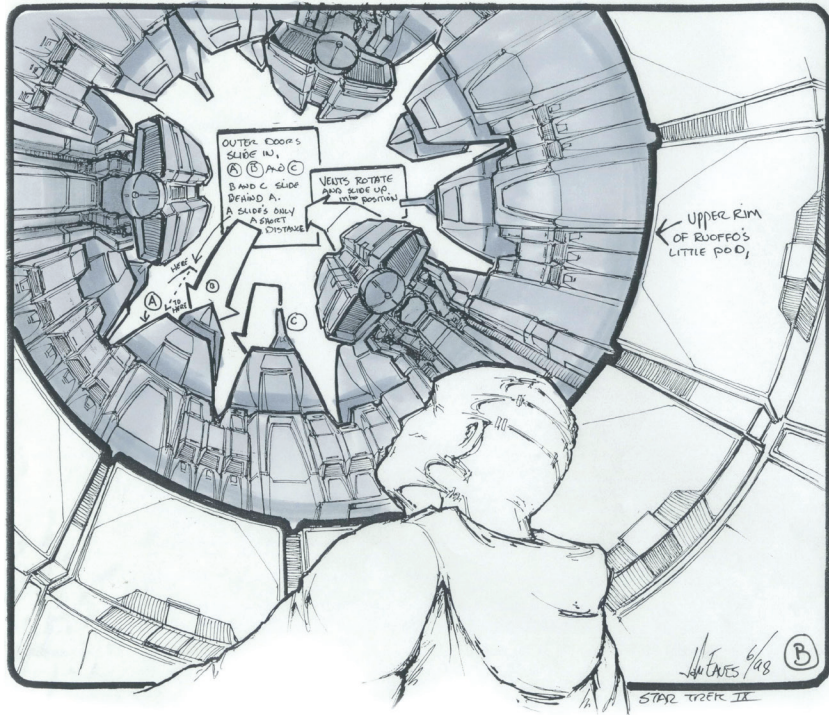
The set was built with a blue screen wrapped around it that could be removed in post production and replaced with visual effects. As Eaves remembers, some ambitious ideas were being thrown around. "We always thought that the blue part of the set was going to be a bluescreen element. We added an open



framework so you could see space changing around you, the wings opening and so on. I think they probably had a plan for it, but it didn't work."

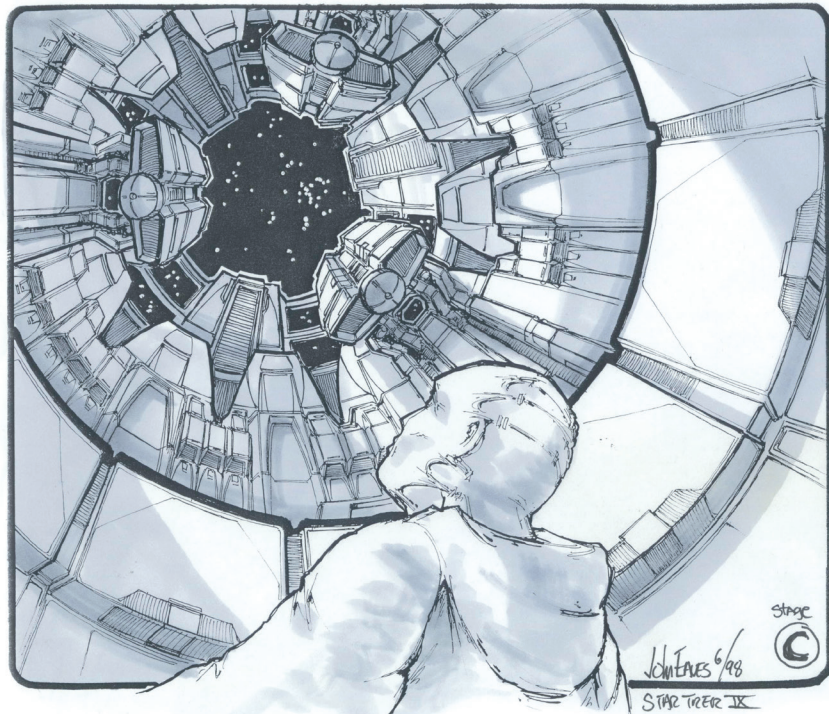
In the finished movie, Picard and Ru'af'o make their way through a vertical set. As Eaves explains they are actually working their way 'horizontally' through the length of the ship. Given that the gravity on any ship is artificial, there's no reason why it should always operate in the same way. At one point though, the production even considered having Picard and Ru'af'o run around the walls. "We drew it with the idea that there was artificial gravity a bit like '2001'," Eaves explains. "Because the gravity was artificial, they could stand on the walls as if

▲ This concept shows the design of the pod, most of which would have been created as a visual effect.



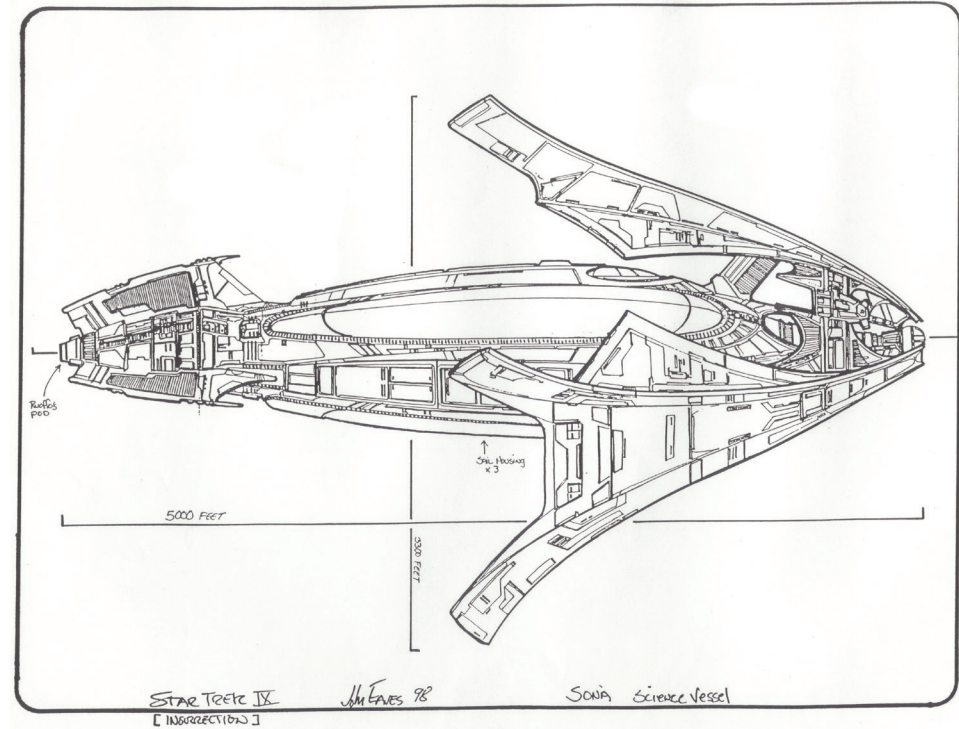
2ND STAGE OF THE collector process, The . Double doors slide open and the seeding vents roll into position

◀ In the original ending, Ru'afu was in the pod when it was fired into the rings around the Ba'ku planet. When the top opened the pod was flooded with metaphasic radiation and Ru'afu got younger and younger until he ceased to exist.



Ruoffo's Demise, The finale stage in the opening of the collector

◀ Eaves drawings show how the pod would open up. The amount of space that we would see was limited so that the visual effects budget could be controlled.



◀ The size of the collector kept changing from shot to shot depending on what looked best, which led Eaves to create a detailed scale chart.

they were the floor. When you are drawing all this stuff you can mess around with those ideas, but when it comes to doing it practically, you'd have to put them on wires and gimbal the set and that was way too expensive!"

*INSURRECTION* was *STAR TREK*'s first fully-CG movie. At the time, relatively few companies had experience of building CG spaceships so Santa Barbara studios, who built the CG version of the collector, asked Eaves to provide them with as much reference as possible. "This was the first film we went all CGI," he remembers. "At the time a three-quarter sketch was not enough. It would have been enough for a physical model maker, but they asked for more and more information. 'How does this work? And what about this?' That's why you have so many drawings. In the end, we sent it over to Greg Jein to make a study model. They only wanted something basic but Greg being Greg made a beautiful model that you could have filmed if you'd wanted to."

Jein's study model was sent to Santa Barbara Studios who scanned it to make their 3D version. The collector's sails were designed as if they were made of copper-gold chain mail and animated with an application called Cloth.

After the test screening it was decided that the final sequence needed to be more visually dramatic, so a scene was added where the *Enterprise* flies down the length of the collector firing at it, before beaming Picard out at the last moment. At the time, CG struggled with making convincing explosions so this involved making a physical model, or at least sections of it. To do this the VFX team brought in Hunter/Gratzner Industries, who built a series of six by ten foot panels that they could lace with primer cord and blow up physically over the space of week. Meanwhile, Innovation Arts built an eight-foot miniature which could also be blown up. Footage of real fire was added to the CG model creating a satisfying end for the collector.

# STAR TREK™

