

JUMP POINT

ISSUE: 10 10



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FROM THE COCKPIT

GREETINGS, CITIZENS!

Welcome to December's (somewhat) festive issue of **Jump Point**!

Following on from October's celebration of an entire decade of *Star Citizen*, this month we're blowing out the candles for the big one: 10 years of **Jump Point** magazine!

Your community magazine premiered two months after *Star Citizen*'s official announcement at Gamescom, 2012, and promised to contribute to the open development model with behind-the-scenes reports, exclusive lore, and interviews with the devs making the game possible. And ten years later (almost to the date), we're carrying on the tradition started by David Ladyman, Ben Lesnick, and the original **Jump Point** team all those years ago.

This issue, we're talking all things lighting with the team behind illuminating the always-beautiful locations of the 'verse. A huge thank you to them for taking the time to cast light onto one of the least-covered yet most-important elements of game building.

We're then diving into the development of Crusader's all-new concept ship series, the Spirit.

And in the spirit of the season, the Narrative team seeks out the origins of the two-day Banu festival, Luminalia.

Finally, we're looking back at some past **Jump Point** highlights from its tenure as the biggest, best, and (to our knowledge) only in-house community videogame magazine.

Thank you to everyone who's read **Jump Point** over the last ten years and continues to support everything we're doing at Cloud Imperium; we wouldn't be here without you.

We'll see you next year, as Ben would say, though the **Jump Point**!

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BEHIND THE SCENES: LIGHTING THE 'VERSE

The next time you visit your favorite place in the 'verse, stop for a moment and take in its beauty. While the meticulously crafted scenery, busy characters, and immersive narrative touches define the location, it's

Star Citizen's Lighting team that unites the disparate pieces to make the 'verse more memorable with every passing release.

In the spirit of the ongoing Glow Festival,

Luminalia, we spoke to the artists to get an insight into their processes and the challenges they face when lighting the iconic locations of Stanton (and beyond).

BEFORE LIGHTING PASS



BEFORE LIGHTING PASS



END OF THE LINE

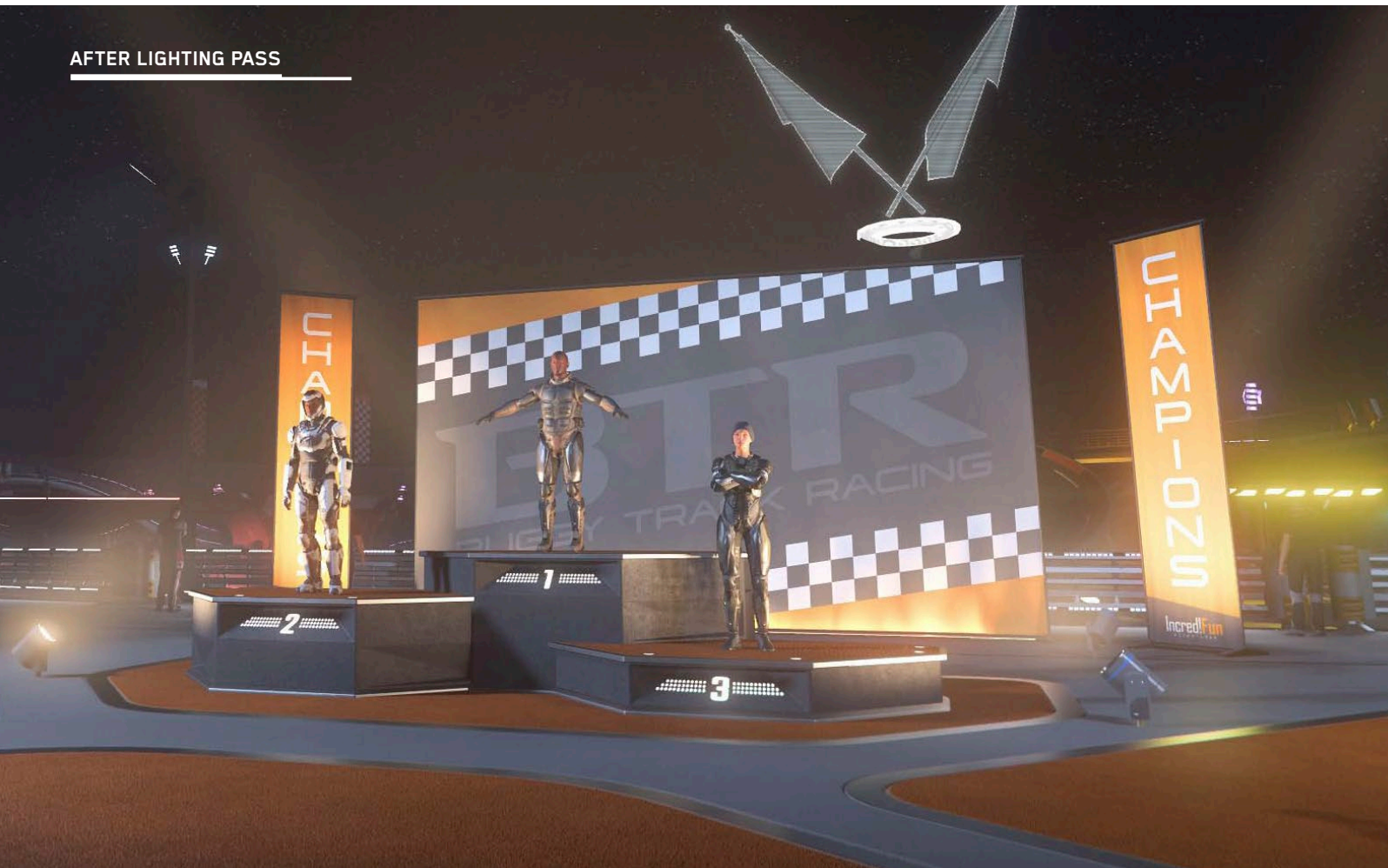
The Lighting team's journey begins toward the end of a location's development. Throughout construction, the various development teams concept, build, and eventually place the assets that populate *Star Citizen's* playable space. But, from a biome's geology and flora to the architectural style and interior designs, everything is created under the clinical environment of the game engine. Rectifying this is where the Lighting team makes its mark. Assistant Lighting Director Chris Campbell explains.

"The Lighting team generally is at the end of a location's development process. Final lighting requires that the location be finished from an art and dressing perspective and then lighting visually ties the environment together."

Lars Hofrichter, lead lighting artist, further details that, alongside requiring the assets be art-complete, work can't begin until the layout of a traversable location is also in the final stages.

"We must wait for environment art to settle on the final layout and dressing. Once that is done, we can be sure that we don't block the player path when placing light fixtures, for example, and we can ensure that all gameplay-relevant areas are properly lit."

AFTER LIGHTING PASS



AFTER LIGHTING PASS



BEFORE THE DAWN

The lighting process begins with influences and inspiration, with the team looking at everything from a location's early concept art to classic films and recent videogames.

Alice Pepin-Desjardins, junior lighting artist, shares her and the team's biggest inspirations.

"As lighting artists, we take inspiration from a lot of different places. Anything sci-fi obviously is a big part of that, from Star Trek to Blade Runner, but since the PU is so diverse with planets and racetracks and huge cities, we also have to search outside of that to complement whatever look we go for in a specific location. For example, when making the Lorville racetrack, I looked for references of mining pits at night to get a better idea of what something of this scale would look like. Sometimes we'll even go about our business in the real world and see something that catches our eye and take pictures of it for later use."

Campbell adds his own influences when approaching the lighting of *Star Citizen's* unique but thematically classic future-space locations.

"It's no secret that visually our game is heavily influenced by classic science fiction movies from the 70s, 80s, and 90s, and for me the lighting is no different. I'm a big fan of cinematography in film and how lighting and camera/lens choices can either subtly or overtly invoke certain feelings."



An artist gets their inspiration from every aspect of life. It can be from films, just around our desk, roads we walk, restaurants, home, and so on. We try to recreate our world or an imaginary one for which everything around influences and acts as a reference.

ASHOK KUMAR, SENIOR LIGHTING ARTIST

LIGHTING THE 'VERSE

Though the Lighting team makes minor passes throughout the location pipeline to assist in technical passes and look-dev, their first major in-engine work is placing cubemaps, which determines a location's ambient lighting. Typically static, they influence the direction and intensity of light passing through them to give a realistic-yet-manipulatable baseline without over or under-saturating a space.

Lighting Artist Adam Williamson takes us through the early stages of the process.

"Generally, when starting on a new location, we start by doing a technical lighting pass to the location. This includes setting up our cubemaps for our ambient lighting, which is a super important part of lighting a space. In that technical set up we also place fog, color grades, and light groups. Next, we then place our key lights, which are where we would like the attention to be focused, and come up with a nice main shot."

Once the base lighting is implemented, creating the specific feel of the location begins, which is key to accurately portraying its in-fiction role. From the pervasive danger of long-neglected Grim HEX to the literal and figurative coldness of New Babbage, this stage is vital to making a location feel real and lived in. Campbell further details its importance.



"With the first stage out of the way, usually we want to know what the overall mood is for the location. Is it dark or bright? Dirty or clean? Moody or clinical? And so on. This helps dictate the next step, which is deciding where we want our main sources of light to come from. The key lights will be the focal point of the environment, so they'll be aimed at what we want the player to see first and foremost, like an important NPC, an exit, or a puzzle objective."

Alongside presenting the desired feel of a location, Hofrichter explains that there are various art and technical requirements, particularly when working on an area that players will regularly see and traverse.

"We often try to achieve a cinematic look by taking care that there is enough contrast in a scene and the overall frame is not 'flat.' We also ensure that there is enough ambient lighting in a location, which means that there are no corners that are completely unlit, especially in areas that are reachable by the player."

Following several iterations of mood lighting, the team explores the area in-game to ensure that everything looks correct from the players' perspective.



I start with the technical set up (like cubemaps, lightgroups, and fog volume) then identify where the players are going to come from or what are they're going to look at first to light around that focus point.

After that, I place the basic keylight, define the palette/mood for the location, and slowly start to add depth with the light placement and fog.

When I'm happy with the look and feel of the location, I start to optimize and check in-game to see if anything is wrong from a player's point of view."

CHARLINE WEGRIA, LIGHTING ARTIST



BUDGET PLANNING

When asked about the difficulties of lighting new locations, one specific challenge is mentioned by each artist. Pepin-Desjardins sums it up.

"For new locations, often the challenge ends up staying within budget; some lighting solutions can be quite expensive, so having to have that balance of what you want versus what you can have is, I would say, the hardest part."

In this instance, 'budget' refers to the amount of graphical processing that lighting can use out of the overall pool available to the game. Assets like props tend to take a fixed amount, where adjusting set values like level-of-detail can help the devs mitigate cost and fit within a desired budget. However, lighting costs can fluctuate depending on several factors.

"I think the biggest challenge is in keeping lighting optimized while trying to bring out rich, detailed shadows and material responses. It's a constant balancing act, especially where very few of our locations exist in total isolation from others, meaning lighting has to be optimized not only for the location itself but also all surrounding locations that can be seen."

As new locations and tech enter the 'verse, existing locations often need a further pass to ensure they're in line with the current visual standard, are taking advantage of the latest updates, and are optimized as well as possible. Williamson and Hofrichter respectively detail the needs of Stanton's older locations as development progresses.

"With older locations, over time new tools and features can come in so we need to try and make sure we keep these locations up to date as much as possible."

"And we often have to revisit legacy locations due to code changes that can break features in our lighting pipeline. So, making sure that old locations still look up to date and are not broken is a big part of our job."





INTERGALACTIC AEROSPACE EXPO

The most recent example of the Lighting team's exemplary work was seen by tens of thousands of players at this year's Intergalactic Aerospace Expo (IAE). And unlike amplifying the natural beauty of a planet or peppering industrial grit around a space station, Campbell explains that the event halls came with their own challenges.

"Our biggest challenge for lighting events like IAE is trying to give every ship a 'showroom' quality look, which involves a lot of dedicated lights and shadows and is quite expensive to render. Suddenly, when you have a lot of ships in a single room and you can see all of them at once, you have to balance the quality and cost of hundreds of lights while trying to minimize the impact of those optimizations from being visible to the player. I know this is something we haven't fully solved yet but we are trying to improve it each time we work on a new event."

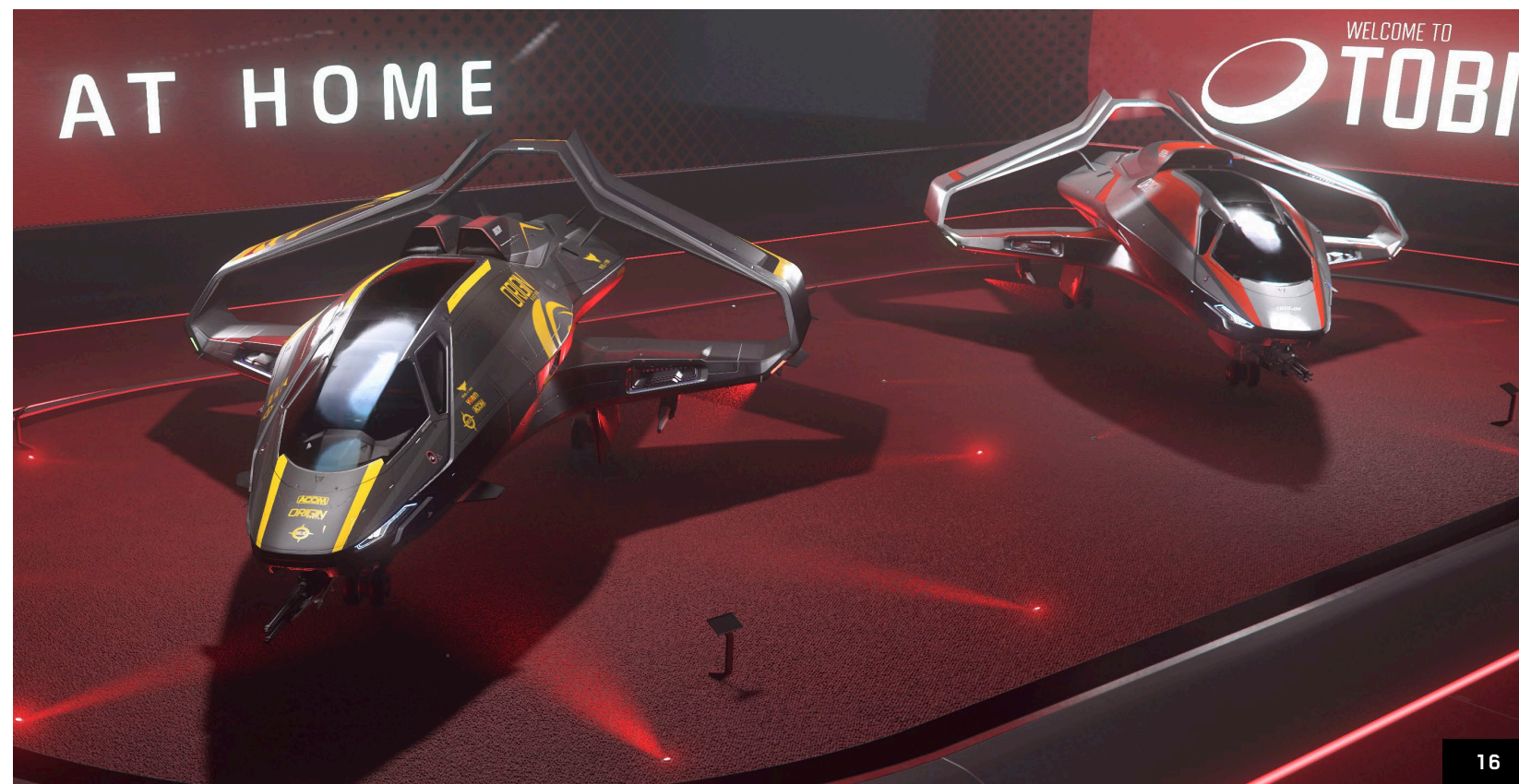
The rest of the 'verse is sometimes more forgiving in that regard.

Smaller rooms, more doors, and the compartmentalization of areas give lighting artists a lot more room to add more expensive and higher-quality lighting setups."

Pepin-Desjardins adds: *"I would say that the biggest challenge of IAE is the size of it. There are many days to light with multiple ships and very big mains halls with secondary halls and even underground exhibitions, so making sure that everything fits together perfectly for the event is the challenge."*

With the IAE halls closed for another year, the Lighting team recently moved focus to Stanton's upcoming locations, including the colonial-style outposts, derelict habitation units, and the update to Lorville's skyline and building interiors.

However, one significant upcoming location is a whole new challenge...





“For Pyro, we are aiming for a moodier feel that captures the gritty feeling of the location. That means adding more contrast and dark corners with flickering lights here and there to emphasize the lore. That also comes down to the color palette that we use to create a more hostile feeling compared to Stanton.”

LARS HOFRICHTER, LEAD LIGHTING ARTIST

LIGHTING THE WAY

Next year, the jump point to the Persistent Universe's second star system will finally open. And unlike the well-populated and governed space of Stanton, Pyro is a predominately barren system ruled by outlaw groups and pirate gangs. Pepin-Desjardins explains the differences between lighting these locations.

"The general aesthetic of Pyro is very different from Stanton. Everything is a bit more broken, made up on the spot, so for us it's quite different from Stanton's often clean-cut appearance. But it is very fun, we get to use a lot of different colors and hues together to create those unique locations."

While Stanton has a wide variety of affluent or working planets, the Pyro system is defined by its long-gone mining industry, volatile dwarf star, and habitants not willing or able to live anywhere else. All of this leads to an aesthetic not seen yet in the *Star Citizen* universe. Artist Charline Wegria shares the challenge of lighting such a unique setting.

"For places like Ruin Station, since everything is abandoned and broken, you need to find an alternative way to light the location, like adding heaters and portable lights, which is completely different from everything in the Stanton system."



However, despite the tonal and visual disparity, Williamson explains that the actual lighting process remains largely the same compared to that of Stanton.

"When doing lighting for both Pyro and Stanton, the process in general is the same but the main difference is we want to create a very different feeling/mood between the two. Generally, Pyro is a much darker, eerier place compared to Stanton, which we can highlight through lighting."

So, with a whole new star system in progress alongside new outposts, space stations, and derelict habs, is there anything else exciting in the Lighting team's future? Kumar leaves us with a tantalizing peek into the future.

"A little spoiler: Lots of unknown worlds. Stay tuned..."

A HUGE THANK YOU TO:

Chris Campbell	Assistant Lighting Director
Lars Hofrichter	Lead Lighting Artist
Ashok Kumar	Senior Lighting Artist
Alice Pepin-Desjardins	Junior Lighting Artist
Charline Wegria	Lighting Artist
Adam Williamson	Lighting Artist



BEHIND THE SCENES: CRUSADER SPIRIT

THE SPIRIT OF CRUSADER

Late last year, while planning for 2022's ship release schedule, the love for one shipbuilder was a force that couldn't be ignored. Crusader Industries is a titan of shipbuilding and interstellar logistics, predominantly known for manufacturing transport vehicles exclusively used by heavy industry and the military. However, its relatively recent entries into the consumer market caused a stir both in and out of the 'verse.

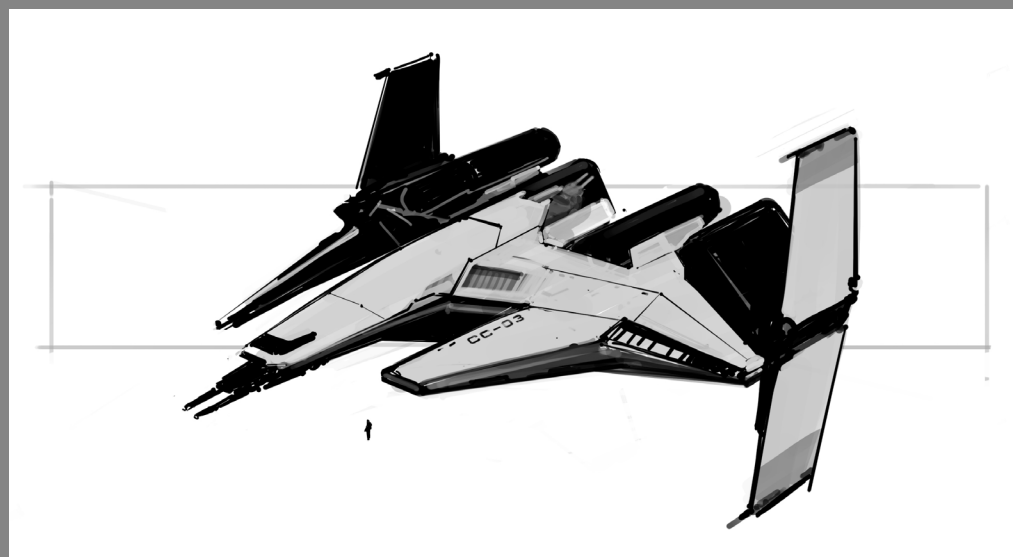
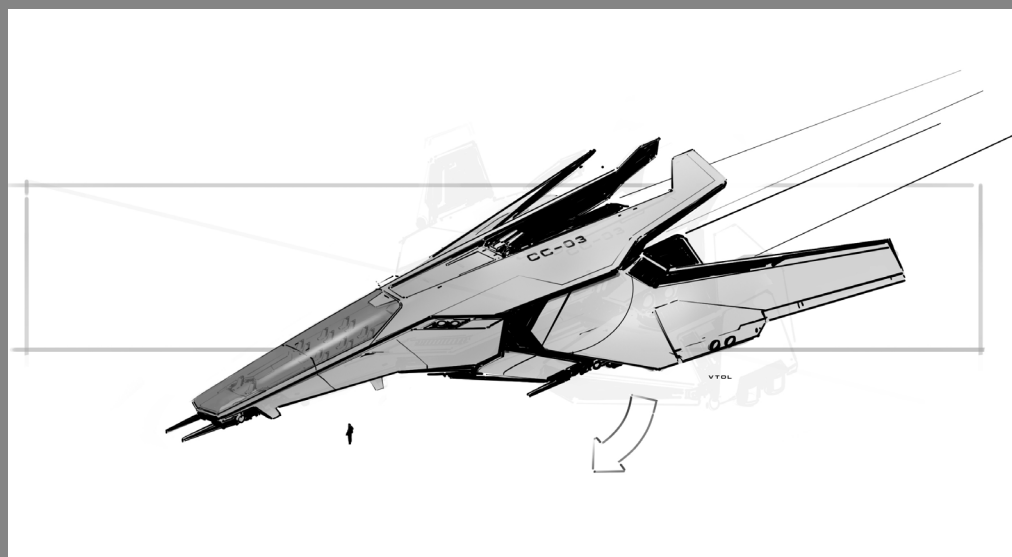
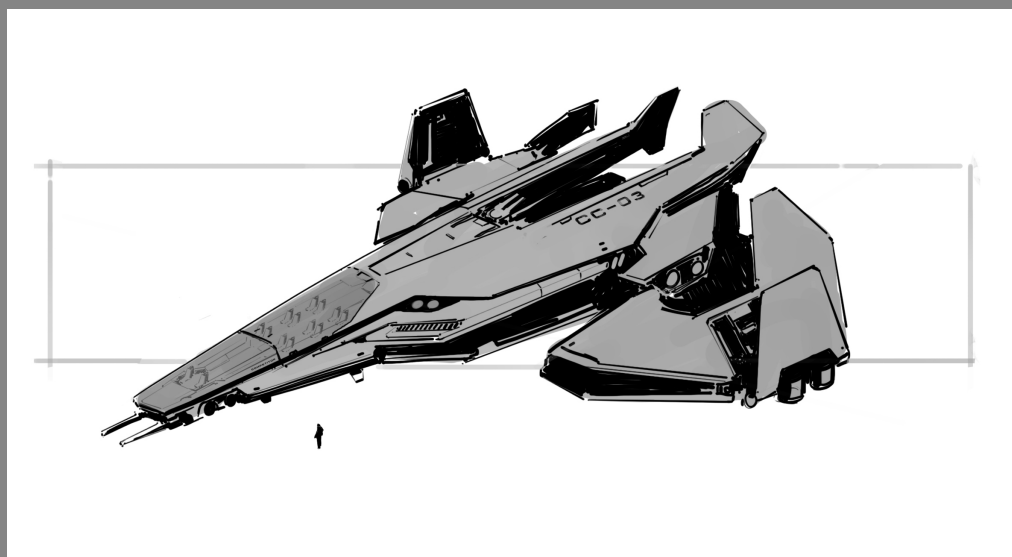
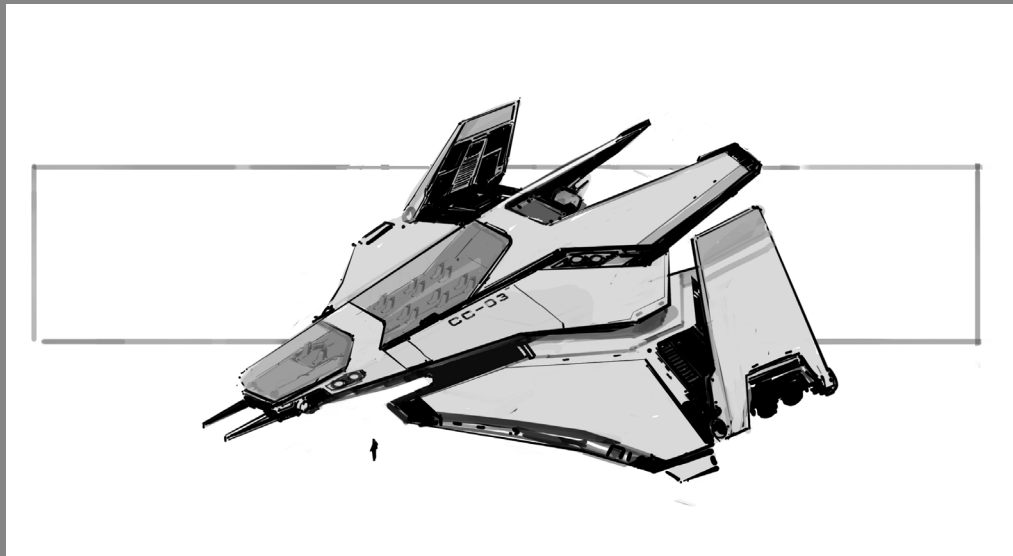
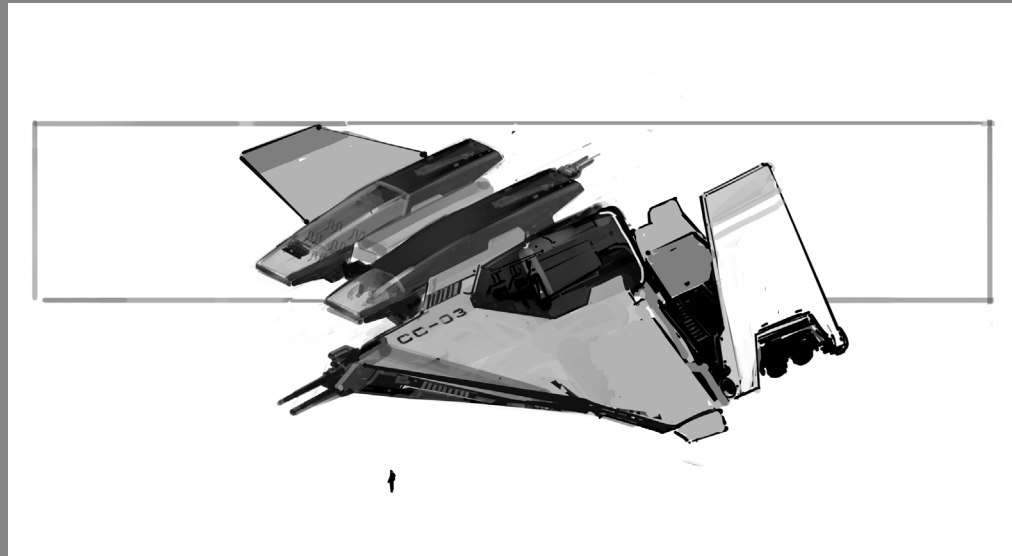
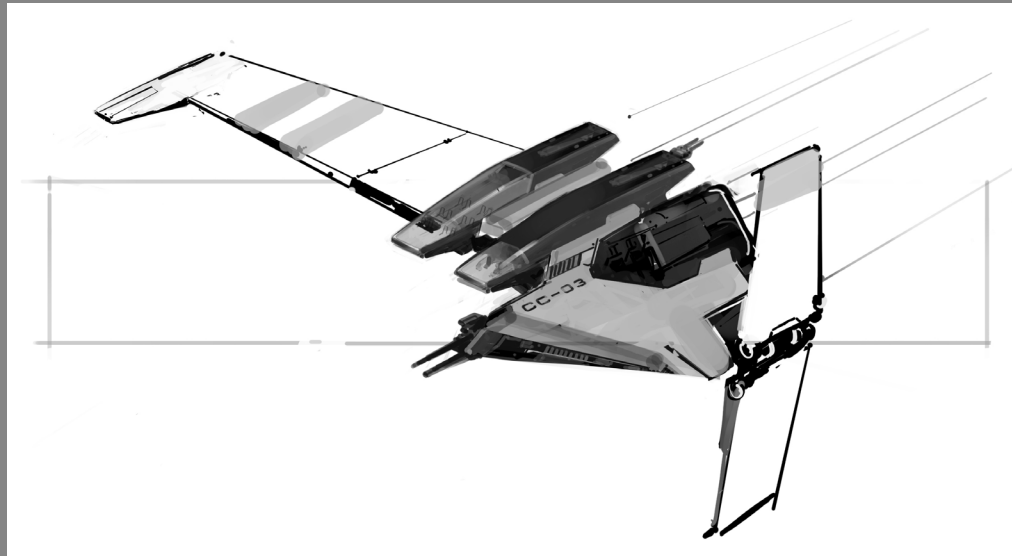
Owing to distinctive design and laser-focused purpose, Crusader's iconic fleet had masses of dedicated fans that were hoping for more. So, when a new competitor for the ubiquitous Drake Cutlass was planned, there was only one manufacturer in the running for the honor.

The original concept brief itself was a simple one:
"Crusader's Cutlass competitor. A two-crew cargo ship designed for securely transporting valuable cargo with Crusader Industries' signature toughness."

In pursuit of the Cutlass range's versatility following the Black, Blue, Red, and Steel variants, the new ship would have variants supporting three careers: cargo hauling, passenger transport, and bombing.

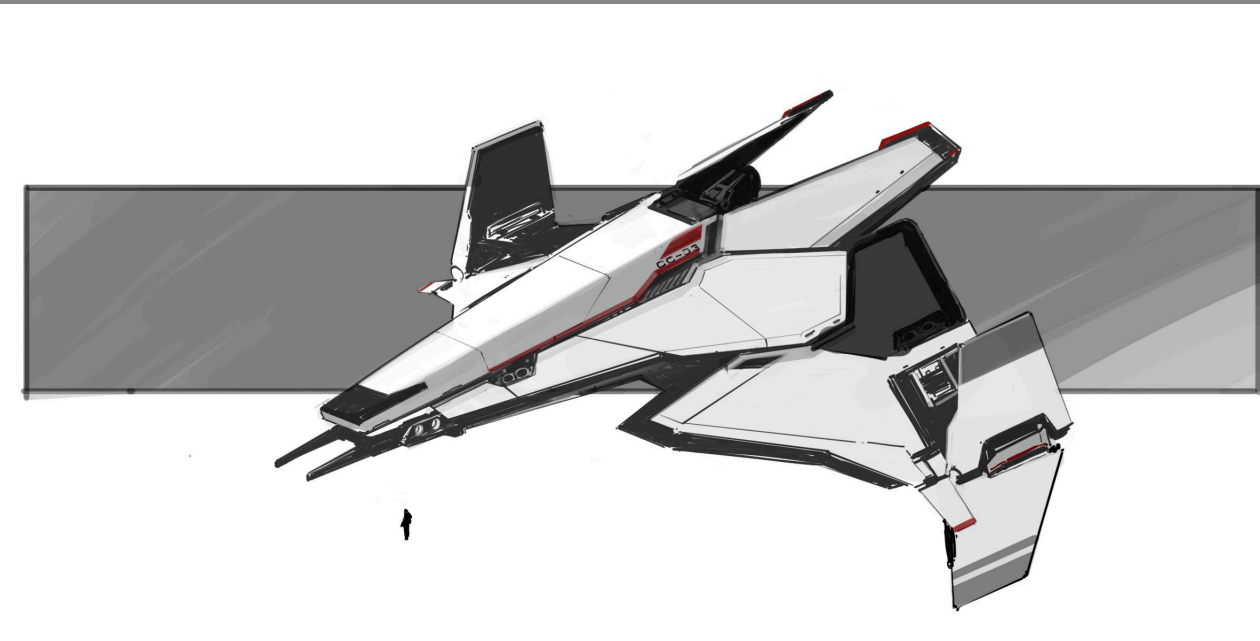
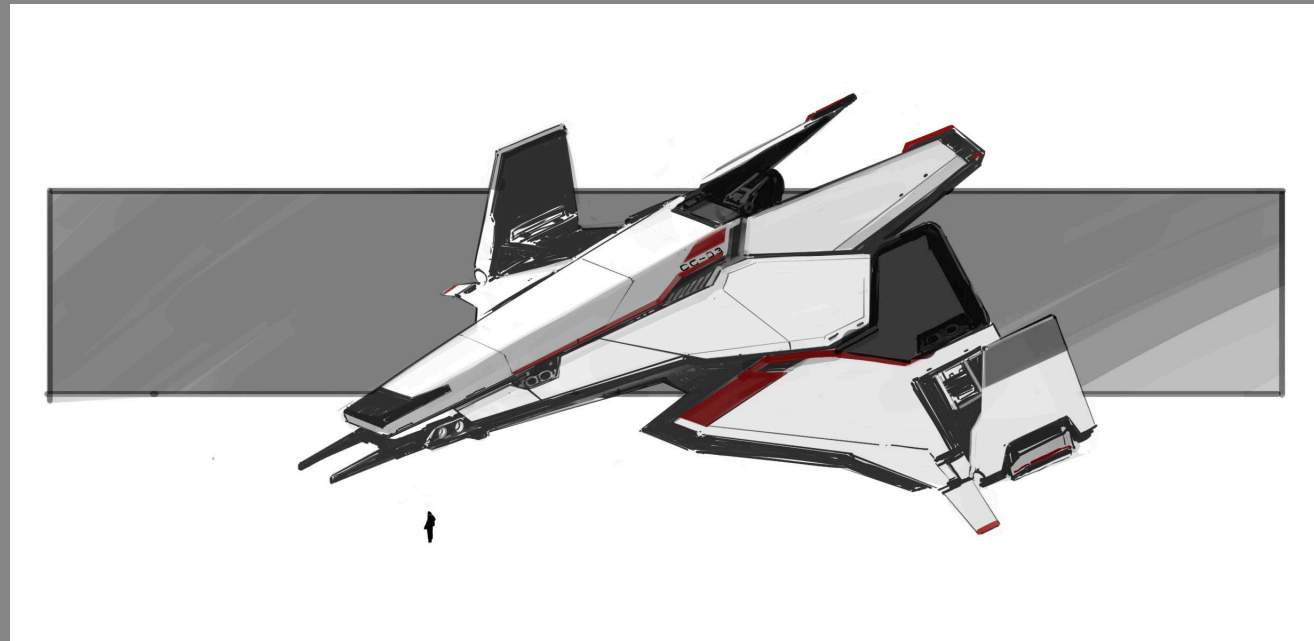
SOUL OF THE GALAXY

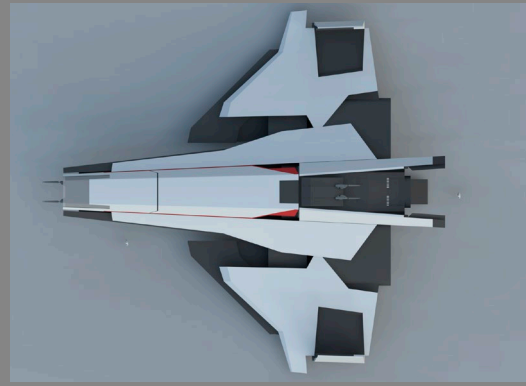
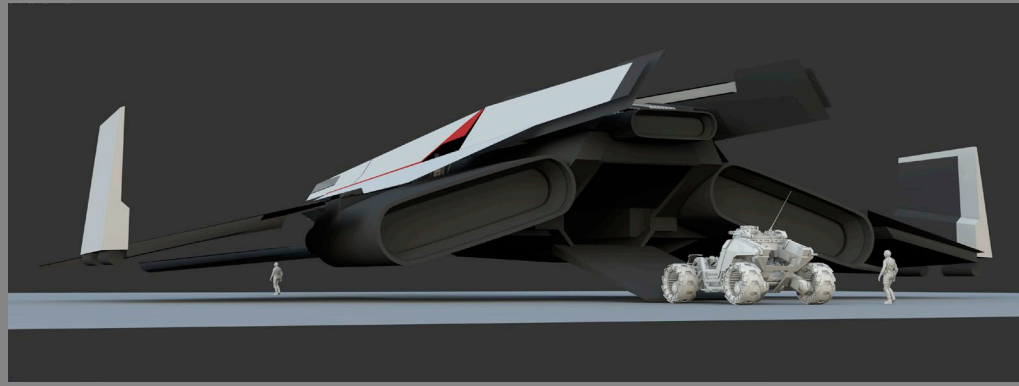
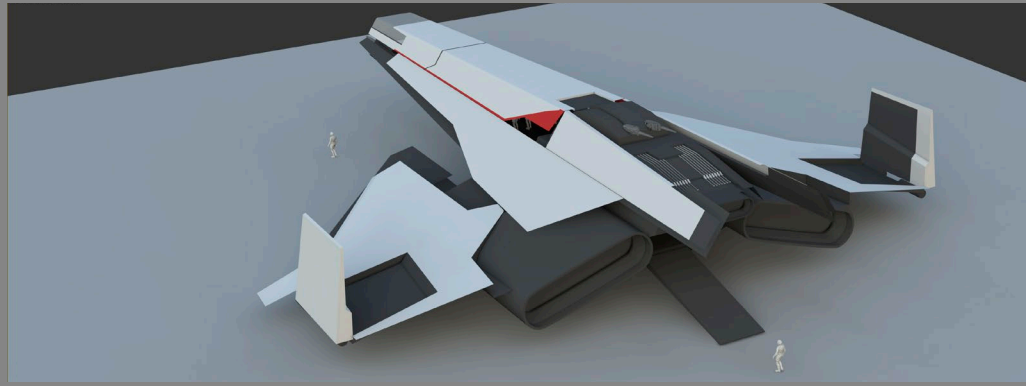
For the Ship team, the challenge of creating a genuinely viable alternative to an already much-loved ship was two-fold. Not only did the Cutlass rival have to offer at least a comparable level of objective utility, it had to clearly embody the company behind it; the same way the Cutlass personifies a societal outlaw operating on the fringes of the law, the new ship had to make a statement in line with Crusader's single-minded design philosophy. And so, with the weight of an entire brand and the expectations of a dedicated community of Crusader fans on their shoulders, the Ship team explored the brief to determine the base ship's design.



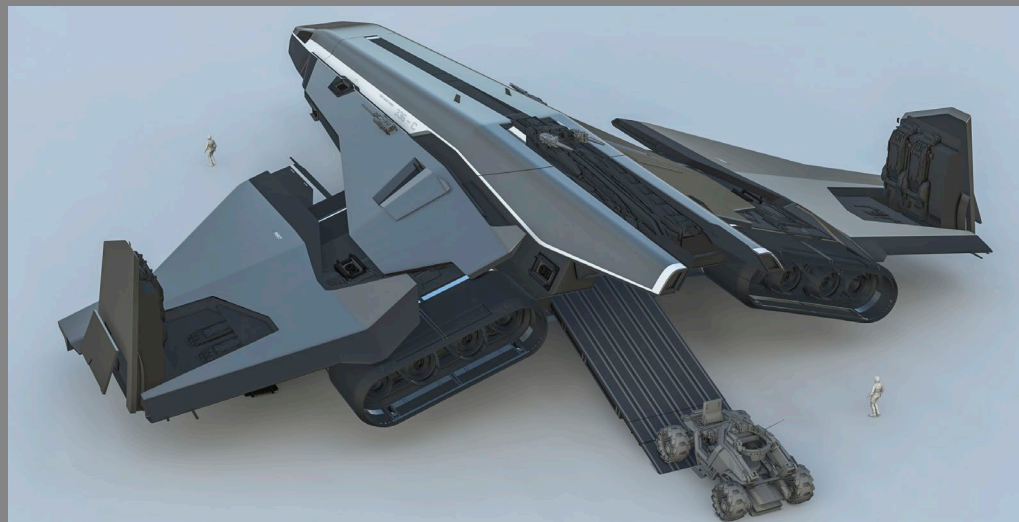
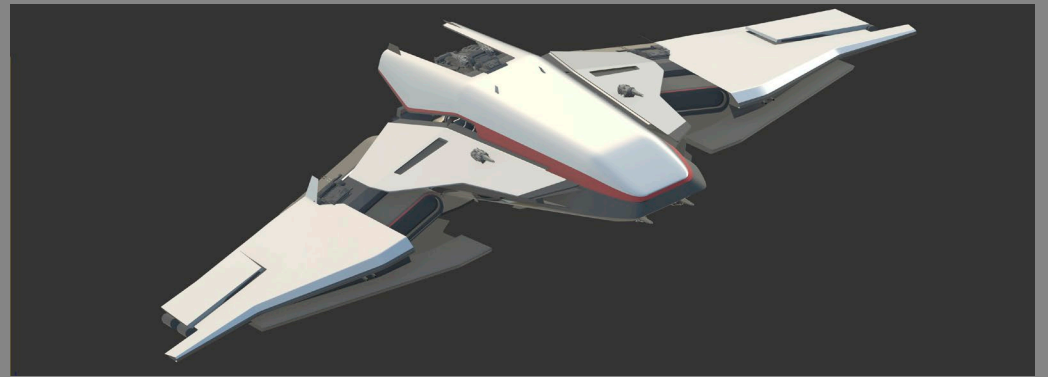
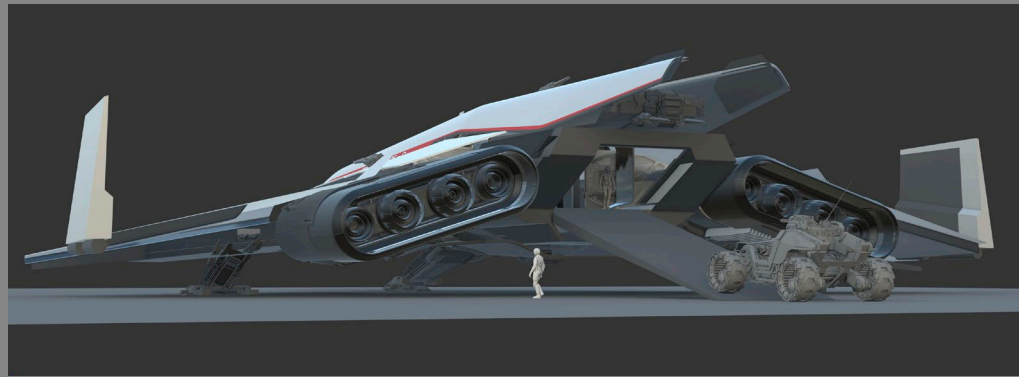
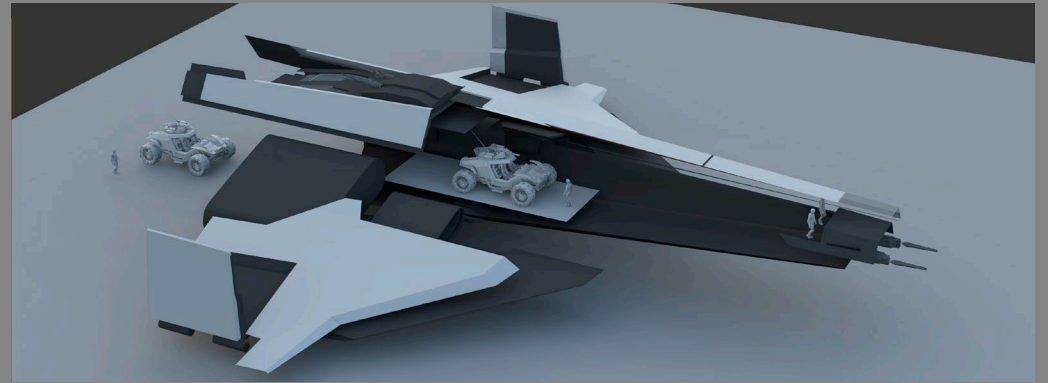
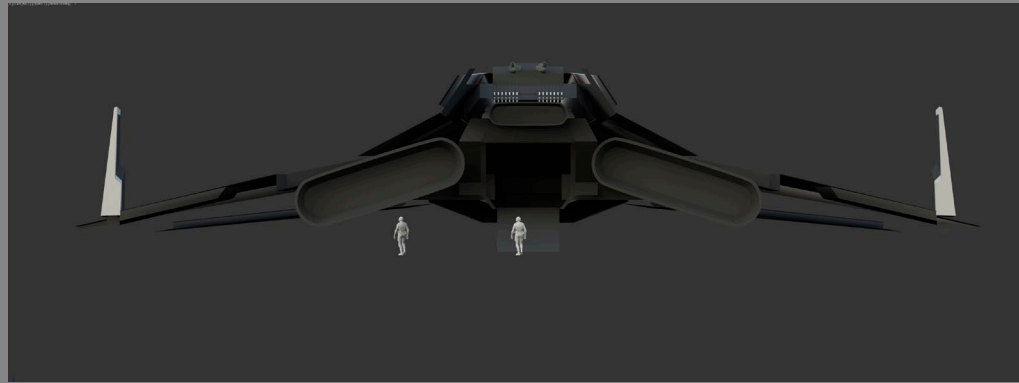
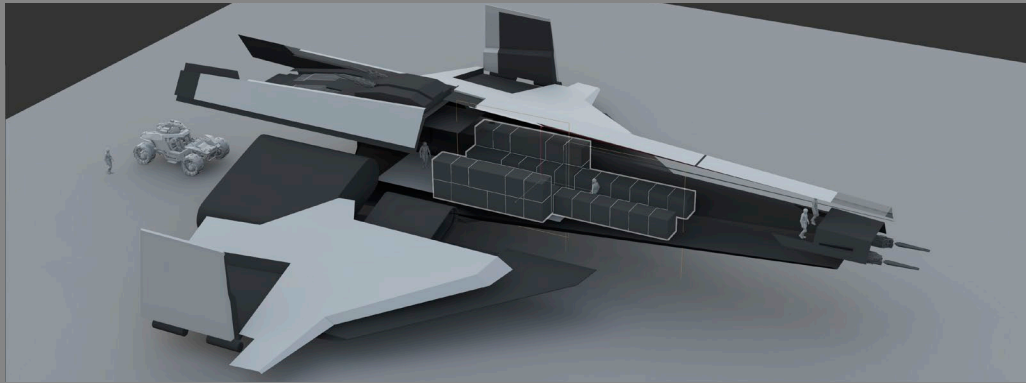
Following the initial exploration of Crusader's clean, layered design language (including a few 'unique' heavily asymmetric looks), a defining feature that would stay with the ship through to completion was determined.

The long, angular fuselage seen in the Mercury and Ares became the literal and figurative backbone of the new ship. Running the chassis' whole length, it allowed the designers to layer the armor, wings, and ailerons in a similar way to both Crusader's previous vehicles. The difference this time, however, was lighter approach resulting in a 'thinner' ship lacking the weight of the brand's heavier, in-service craft.



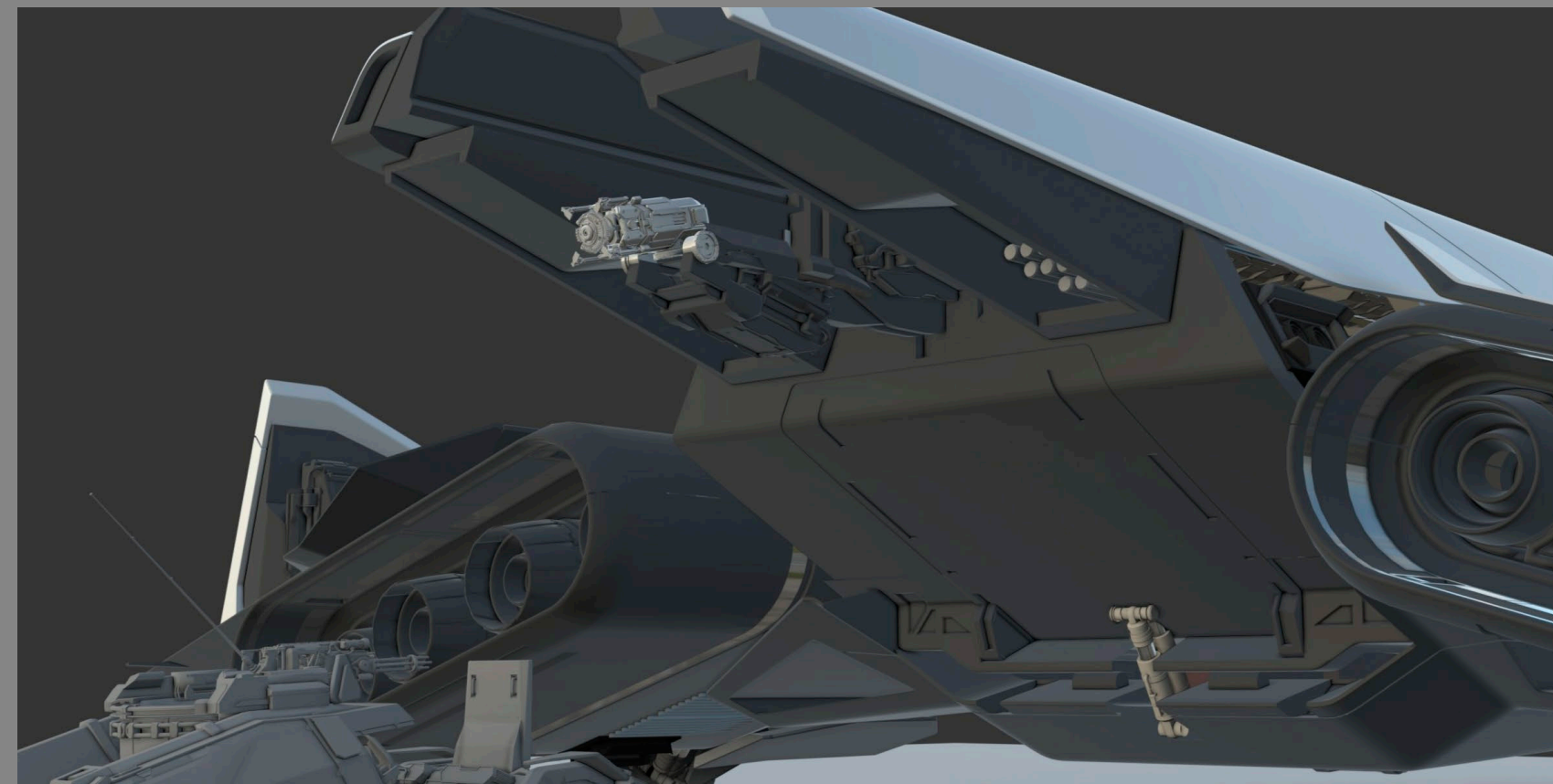
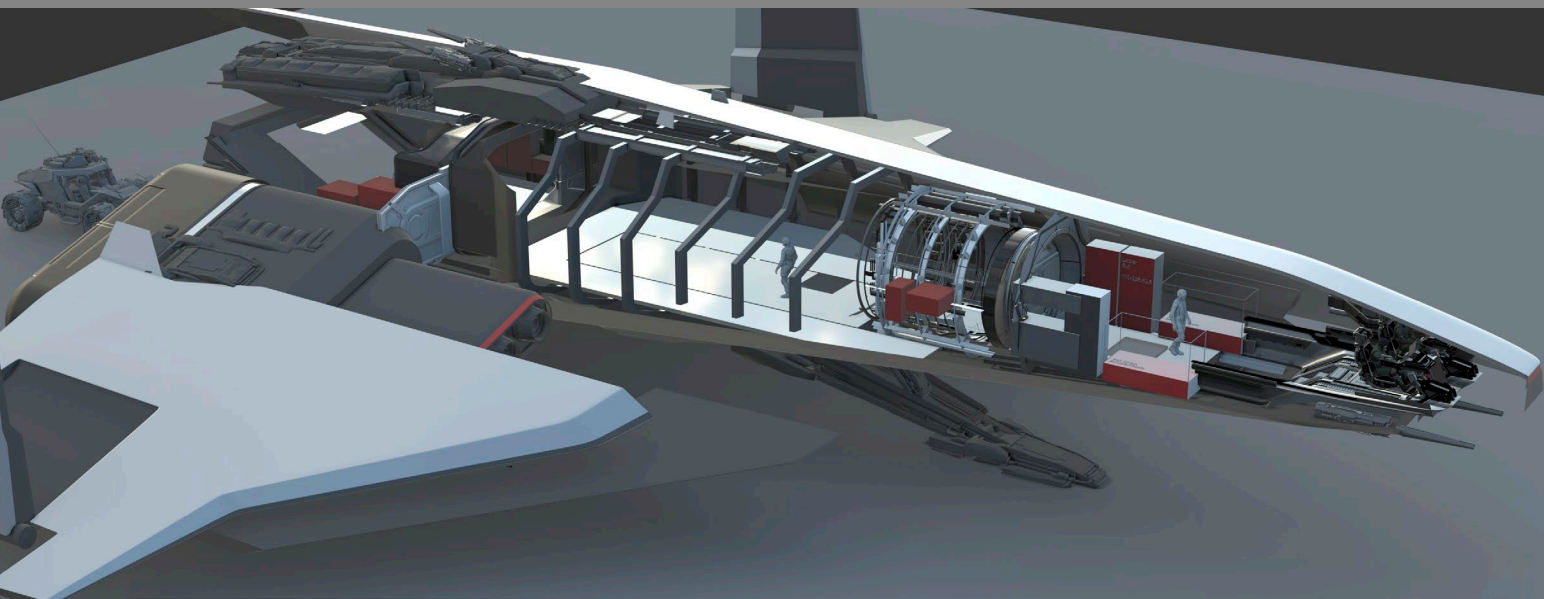


With the concepts approved, the next stage was rendering a full 3D model. Here, various angles were softened and dimensions tweaked to ensure the basic shape would accommodate the prerequisite ground vehicle, pilot and passenger stations, and the trademark Crusader engine configuration. From here, exploration of the three distinct variations began.





C1 SPIRIT



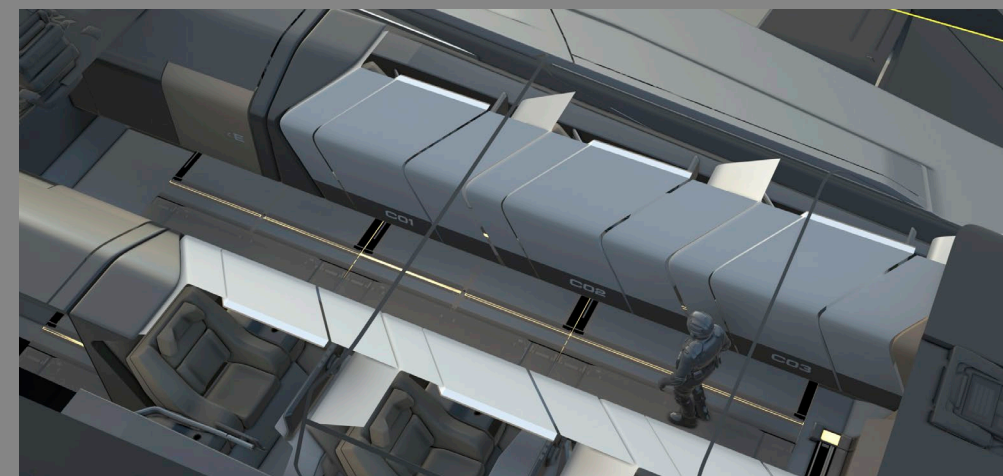
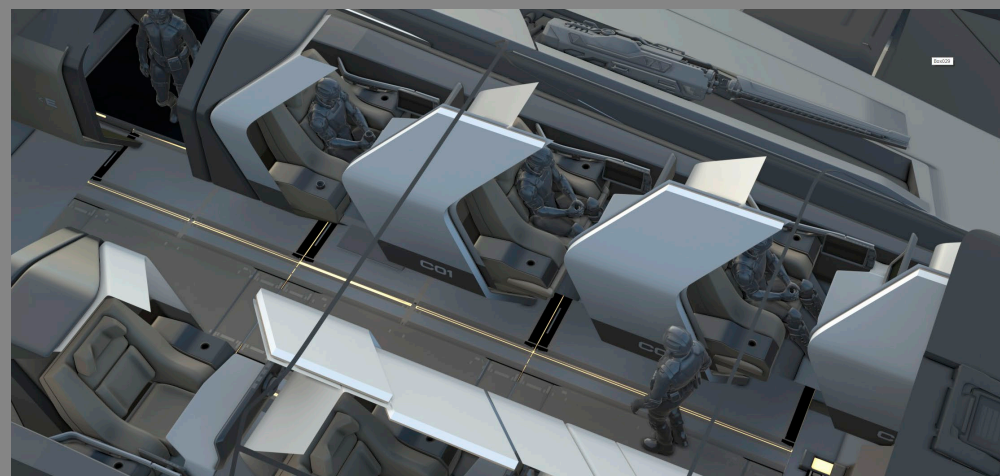
At concept, the passenger transporter was considered the 'base' ship. However, the requirements to comfortably house a selection of VIPs caused further tweaking to the

fuselage than was anticipated. So, the cargo hauler became the main variant, mainly due to its body retaining the clean lines and design cues that were otherwise interrupted on the VIP jet.

These significant differences were also the major reason modularity wasn't considered past the initial design exploration, as it would've compromised the appearance and functionality of the other two too much.



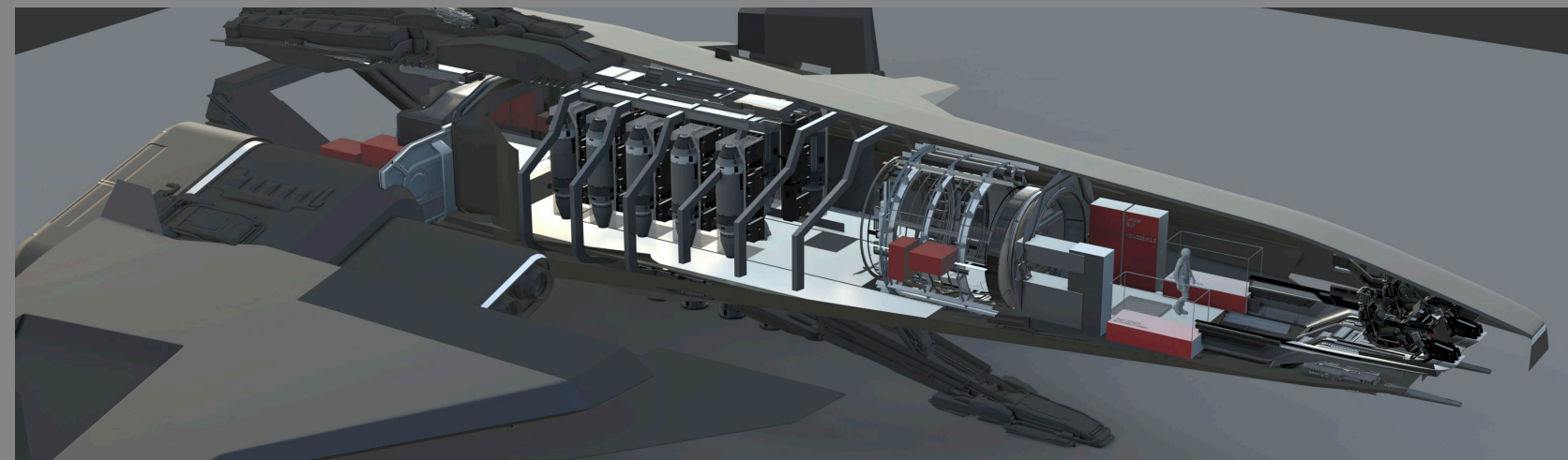
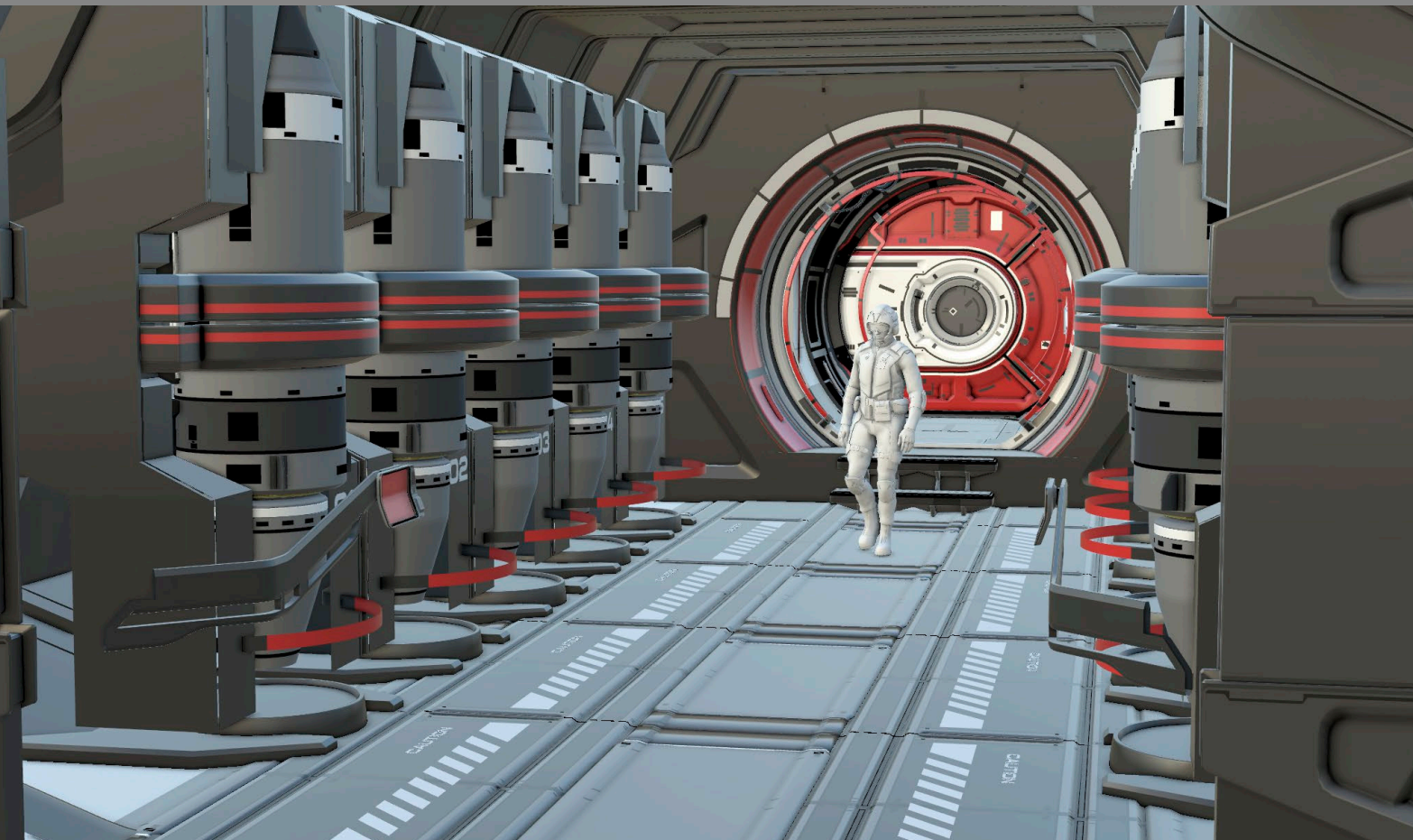
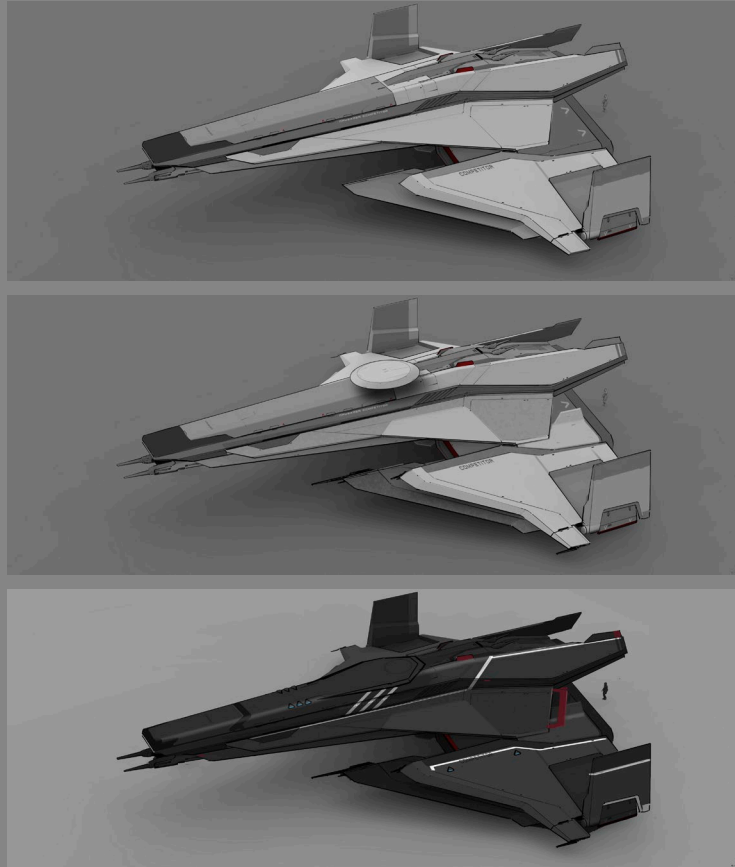
E1 SPIRIT



The passenger variant was further differentiated by enclosed first-class-style seats designed to give uninterrupted views of the universe over the ship's low-set wings. Passenger facilities were also planned for the floor below the seats along with storage for food and drink.

At this stage, the bombing variant received a full ordnance rig inspired by its much-bigger brother, the M2 Hercules.

A1 SPIRIT



ALL IN THE NAME

Much deliberated over but eventually locked in before wider internal unveiling was the new ship's name. Eagle-eyed backers will be aware that the Spirit abandons the naming convention introduced with Crusader's first ship, the Genesis Starliner, which continued through the Mercury Star Runner, Hercules Starlifter, and Ares Star Fighter.

Lead Writer Will Weissbaum shared Crusader's in-fiction reasoning behind adopting a new

naming model in the Crusader Spirit Q&A published following its unveiling.

"Crusader is seeing the Spirit as a new direction for the brand. Starting with the Star Fighter, the company has been moving away from its transport-dedicated roots and expanding into new markets. With the Spirit's multi-role functions, it decided to leave the old nomenclature behind."

It also handily removes the unsustainable requirement of attaching a new chassis name to each ship variety, which was a challenge encountered by many during the creating of the Ares Star Fighter.

However, it continues the model precursor that determines each variant first seen on the Hercules; utilizing A1 for bombing, C1 for cargo, and introducing E1 for passenger transport.

OUT IN THE OPEN

The Crusader Spirit was officially unveiled during Digital CitizenCon 2952 by John Crewe and the Ship team as part of their Talking Ship panel. Well received by Crusader fans and immediate converts to the brand, it added a new ship in the important 'starter-plus' arena – accessible ships that are more than capable of tackling dedicated career gameplay and everyday use.

And although still officially in the concept stage, it'd be surprising for a ship this popular to remain unflyable for long.

**CRUSADER SPIRIT SHIP PAGE**

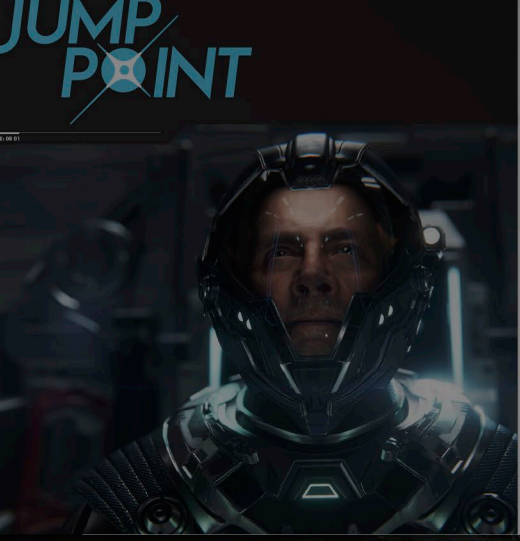
<https://robertspaceindustries.com/pledge/ships/spirit/C1-Spirit>

SHIP PRESENTATION

<https://robertspaceindustries.com/comm-link/transmission/18817-Crusader-C1-Spirit>

Q&A

<https://robertspaceindustries.com/comm-link/engineering/18947-Q-A-Crusader-Spirit>



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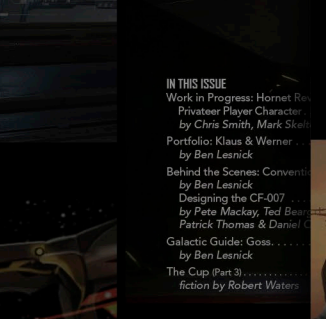
Other Content: Captain Henry's Conversation Ben Lewis

FROM THE COCKPIT:

If you've gotten this far, you already know there are plenty of developers in the world of Star Citizen. Let's start with the obvious: Chris Roberts, Executive Producer and game designer. He's the man who started the project, and he's the man who's still here, leading the charge. He's also the man who's been through the toughest of times, and he's still here, leading the charge. He's also the man who's been through the toughest of times, and he's still here, leading the charge.



JUMP POINT



03 BEHIND THE SCENES: Graycat Industrial RDC

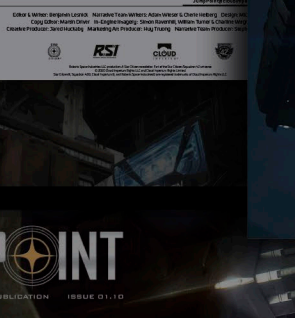
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35 SODORNER TRAVELLOGUE

FROM THE COCKPIT

It's the start of a new year, and we're looking back at the year that was. It's a time of reflection, and it's a time of looking forward. It's a time of reflection, and it's a time of looking forward. It's a time of reflection, and it's a time of looking forward.



03 BEHIND THE SCENES: Wing Commander Ben Lewis

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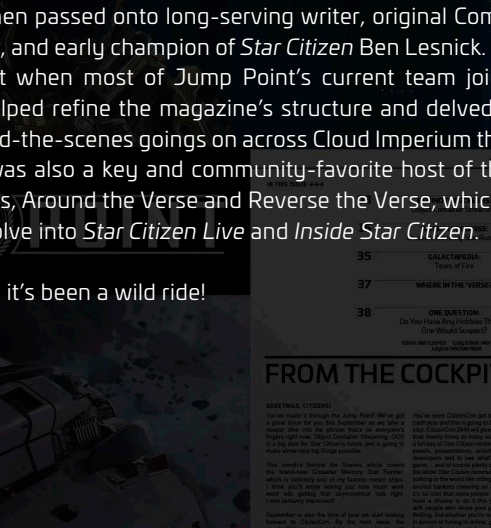
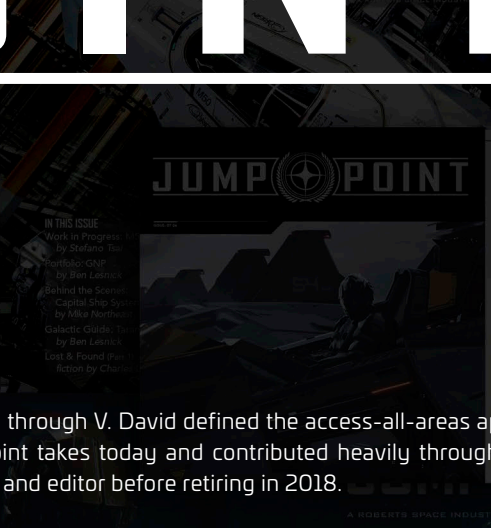
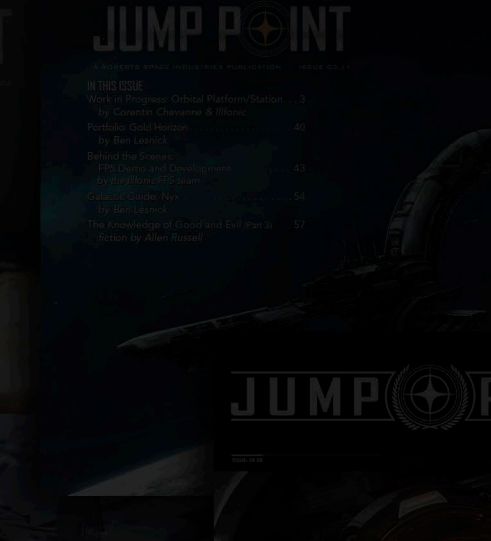
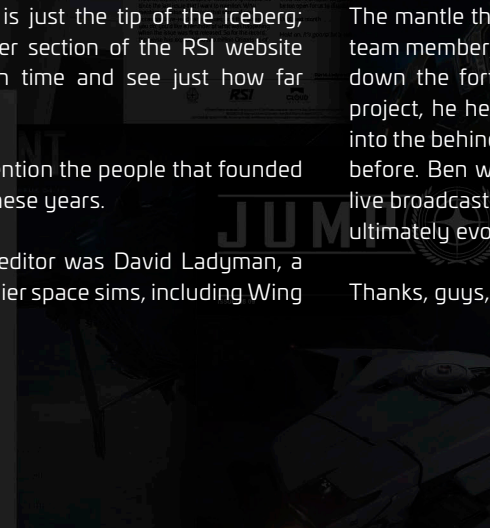
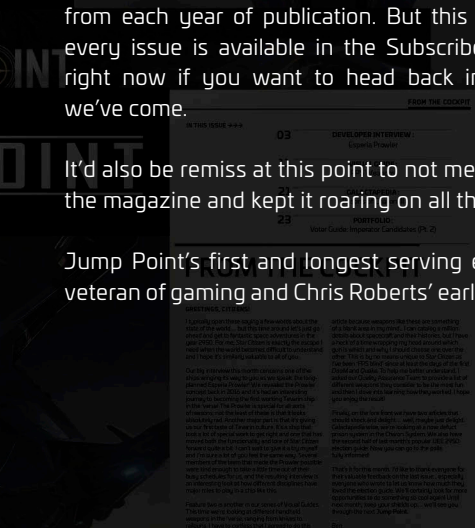
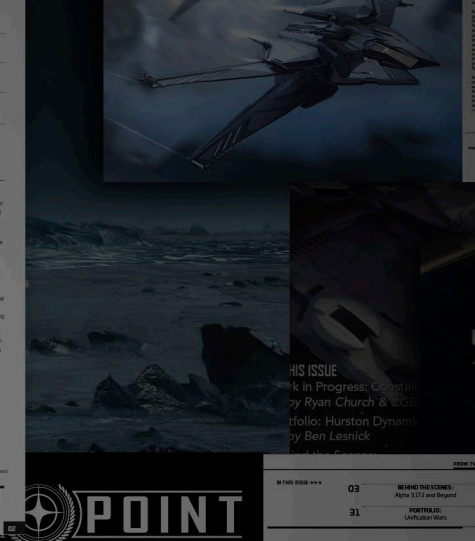
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10 YEARS OF JUMP POINT



Since December, 2012, Jump Point magazine has been detailing the most interesting behind-the-scenes events of *Star Citizen's* on-going development. To celebrate a decade of in-house magazine creation, we're flipping through the last 118 issues and pulling out something from each year of publication. But this is just the tip of the iceberg; every issue is available in the Subscriber section of the RSI website right now if you want to head back in time and see just how far we've come.

It'd also be remiss at this point to not mention the people that founded the magazine and kept it roaring on all these years.

Jump Point's first and longest serving editor was David Ladyman, a veteran of gaming and Chris Roberts' earlier space sims, including *Wing*

Commander II through V. David defined the access-all-areas approach that Jump Point takes today and contributed heavily throughout his time as writer and editor before retiring in 2018.

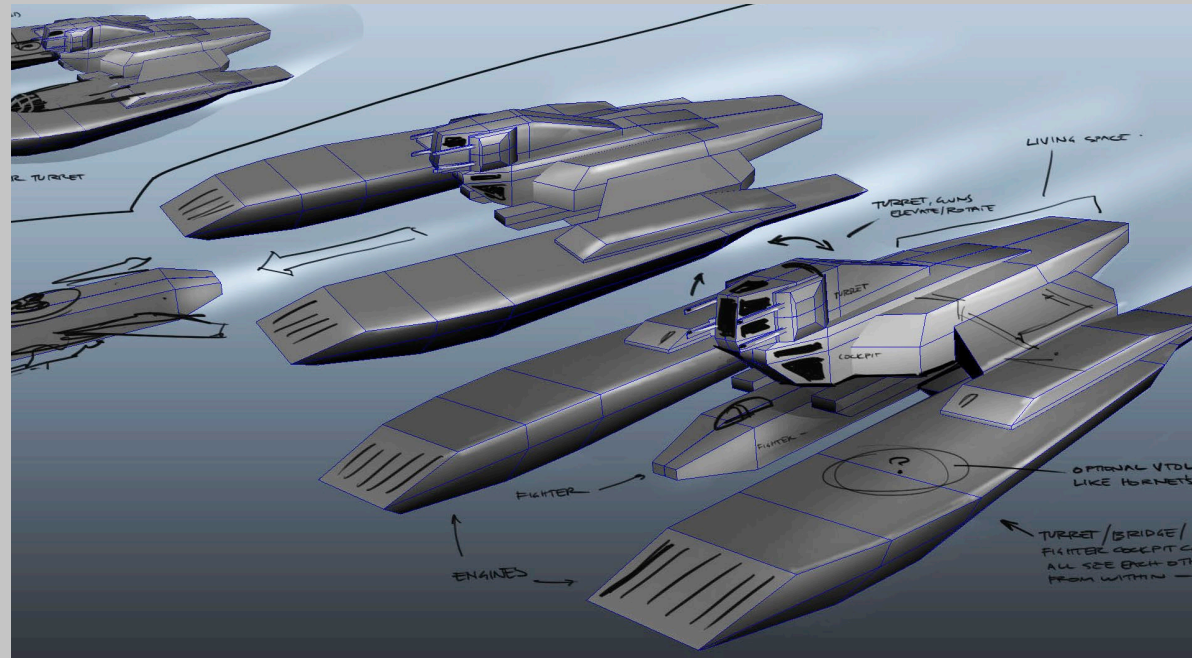
The mantle then passed onto long-serving writer, original Community team member, and early champion of *Star Citizen* Ben Lesnick. Holding down the fort when most of Jump Point's current team joined the project, he helped refine the magazine's structure and delved deeper into the behind-the-scenes goings on across Cloud Imperium than ever before. Ben was also a key and community-favorite host of the early live broadcasts, *Around the Verse* and *Reverse the Verse*, which would ultimately evolve into *Star Citizen Live* and *Inside Star Citizen*.

Thanks, guys, it's been a wild ride!

IN THIS ISSUE
Work in Progress: Rapii Galactic
Portfolio: Cubby Blast
Behind the Scenes: Webside Revamp
Galactic Guide: Tall
Brothers in Arms (Part 2)
Fiction by Andy Rogers



2012 (DECEMBER): ISSUE 1-01, MAYAN END OF THE WORLD EDITION
 "The 300i sends as much of a message with its silhouette as it does with its particle canons."



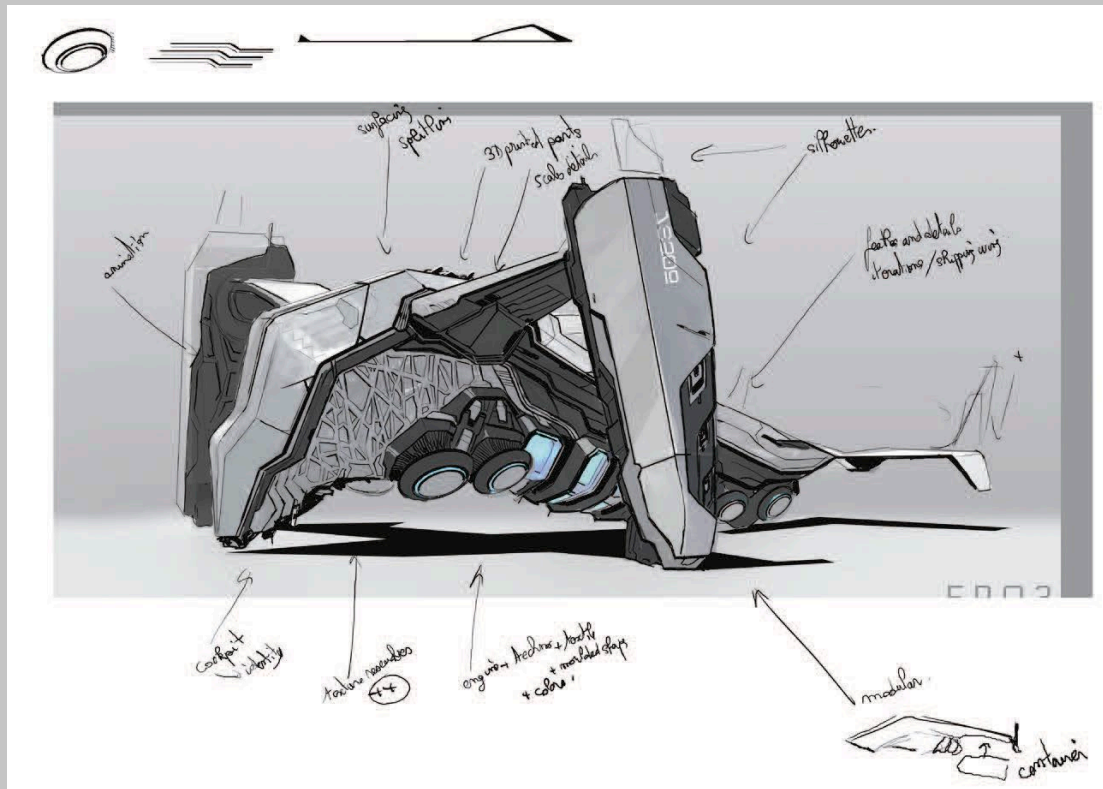
2013 (MAY): ISSUE 1-06, CHARTING THE CONSTELLATION
 "Here's a quick sketch on a possible RSI Constellation..."



2014 (NOVEMBER): ISSUE 2-11, FIRST PLATFORM STATION
 "I tried to represent the Pyro system by including a bright nova behind the station."



2015 (JUNE): ISSUE 3-06, STAND BY ME
 "A heavily tattooed man with a thick Cathcart accent, he is generally the loudest thing in the store, constantly regaling customers with stories about the seedy side of life on Spider."



2016 (DECEMBER): ISSUE 4-12, TEVARIN TOPICS
 "With the Prowler, you will find the perfect fusion of two cultures: the elegance and effectiveness of the Tevarin war machine combined with the reliability of modern UEE technology."

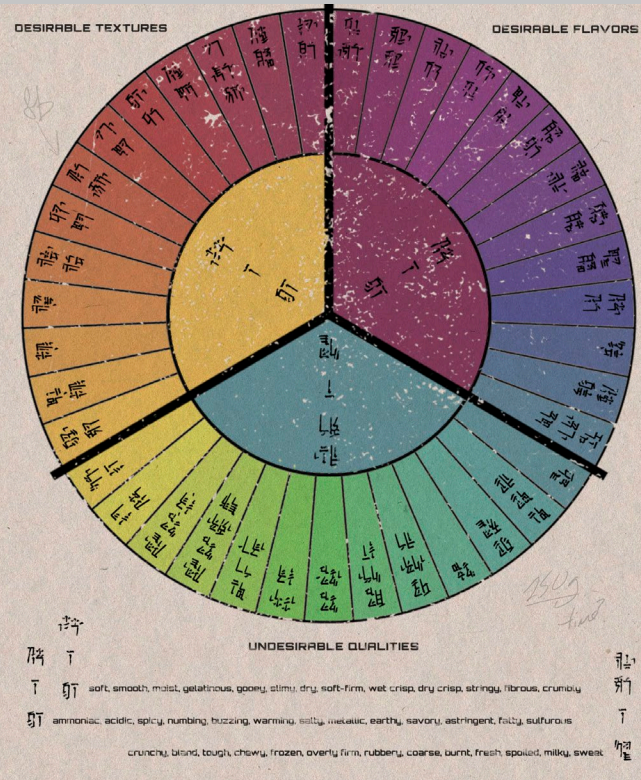


2017 (AUGUST): ISSUE 5-08, MOON SHADOW
 "Yela ran through her mental list of places to search one more time. Cellin was watching their seats and hadn't seen him. If Daymar wasn't using any of the restrooms, then where was he?"



2018 (APRIL): ISSUE 6-04, SCORING 100

"We are very lucky with the community we have. Fantastic human beings. And sometimes they do connect with me and tell me how important a certain track was for them in their very own lives."



2019 (JULY): ISSUE 7-07, WE'RE HAVING A BALLISTA

"Every Xi'an dish is constructed to balance texture with intensity of flavor. 13 favorable tastes, 13 favorable textures, and 13 unfavorable qualities were identified by members of House Uai'i in their treatise, Three Leaves of Flavor."



2020 (AUGUST): ISSUE 8-08, DIGGING AND OUR TALONS

"To hit all the classic tropes in one, the Talon is truly a ship that punches above its weight class – a veritable glass cannon with armor that can truly be described as paper thin!"



2021 (AUGUST): ISSUE 9-08, ORISON ON AND ON AND ON

"Be kind to the whales! Watch but don't touch!"



2022 (AUGUST): ISSUE 10-08, POINT OF INTEREST

"Capable of disintegrating some of the most dangerous vehicles in the 'verse, it's a boon to any ground attack or defense force."



34,000 BEATS

"When will this be over?"

As a child, I asked my parents that question countless times while celebrating Luminalia. It's not that I disliked the holiday, rather I enjoyed it so much that I dreaded it all ending. I loved getting gifts from the host, overindulging on the extensive food spread, and being able to stay up super late during the two-day celebration. So, during all the fun, I always found myself a little worried about when it might be over, and every time I asked an adult when the holiday would end, they would give me the same answer -- 34,000 beats. Of course, that answer drove me to ask the obvious follow up, "Why 34,000 beats?" The most common answer, "Because that's how it's always been," only opened the door to a new batch of questions that either stumped or went ignored by party guests exasperated by my constant barrage of inquiries.

Having never received a satisfactory answer as a child, last year I decided to pose the question to family and friends gathered at the first Luminalia celebration I ever hosted. My parents chuckled as I gathered everyone and asked them to give me their best answer, and those brave enough to

engage in my thought experiment received a little gift. Like in my youth, I heard entertaining and inventive answers but none that really made sense, so I finally decided to investigate the truth for myself. An admittedly tall task considering that the Banu, who created the wonderful holiday and shared it to the UEE, famously don't keep traditional historical records.

AN UNKNOWN KNOWN

My investigation began by asking several Banu friends why Luminalia, called tsikti efanga (Glow Festival) in their native language, lasted 34,000 beats. They all seemed more confused by the inquiry than my Human friends and family. I wasn't surprised considering Banu typically embrace the "what" of a situation and not the "why," yet I still found their answers insightful. The majority of their responses fell within the range of "because that's how it's always been done," but one friend, Bongji, made an interesting distinction by claiming it's because "that's how long the lamp is alight." This got me wondering. Could the holiday last 34,000 beats simply because the first Luminalia lamps held enough oil to stay alight that long?

With Bongji's answer in mind, I reached out to Seneca Orisaka, a renowned scholar on Banu culture and curator at the Banu Friendship Museum in the Davien system. I began the interview by simply asking her the question, but like so many others, instead of directly answering it, she dove into some intriguing theories that have been raised over the centuries. In the 2600s, Leon Dhawan, a scholar on the Banu and amateur numerologist, proposed that Banu originally only counted to three. A hypothesis rooted in the design of their written symbol for the number three, which is the last of the initial integers with an open-bottom capsule before being flipped to an open-top capsule for number four. Dhawan ran with this tenuous theory to make lots of wild and unsubstantiated claims, including that the 34,000 beats in Luminalia represented three itas (a work day or play shift lasting 10,000 beats) plus 4,000 additional beats for naps and big midday meals. Considering the mental gymnastics Dhawan used to reach this conclusion, it's no surprise it didn't take hold. Most scholars disputed Dhawan's theory while others suggested that the Banu originally counted to five. An argument still kicking around some academic circles, even though the Banu have only ever used a base 10 system since coming into contact with Humans.

Meanwhile, others argue that 34,000 beats was the original length of a Gathering on Bacchus II. This theory suggests that these sacred events, where prestigious political Essosouli met to discuss and debate issues that affect the whole of Banu society, used to operate in much the same way as a modern Luminalia festival, with a ceremonial lamp being lit and the Gathering lasting until the oil had burnt out. Yet, Banu practice no such tradition at modern Gatherings and these events are held inconsistently, so it seemed unlikely.

When I pushed Orisaka for her answer, she paused in quiet contemplation. She's dedicated her life to learning everything she can about the Banu but admitted that she can't say with any certainty why the festival lasts that long. Then, her eyes lit up when I asked if it might be related to the style and size of the lamp originally used in the festival. "It absolutely could be as simple as that," she responded. "We have been trying to track down lamps dating back to earlier eras but that has proven quite tricky so far. But, to be honest, one of the most likely answers is that the length of time has very little to do with the Banu at all, and everything to do with us."



HUMAN INFLUENCE

Luminalia may have begun as a Banu holiday but Human influence on the modern celebration is undeniable. Humans first celebrated it in 2438 when a ship-repair Souli on Cestulus (Davien II) lit their lamp and invited Humans to join. Those first Human revelers being blissfully unaware that their attendance committed themselves to a two-day party. Nearby Human merchants watched or joined the raucous festivity, noticing how Souli members effortlessly transitioned between hosting duties and selling their services and wares to guests. Not to be outdone, some Human merchants hosted their own Luminalia celebrations the following year, starting the slow spread of the festival across the UEE. Luminalia became so popular that, in 2557, the UEE government recognized it as an official holiday celebrated annually on December 22. Codifying this day marked Humanity's first major change to the festival, as previously the date changed based on what Banu system you were in or what Souli hosted it. Banu have since widely adopted December 22 as the date of the holiday in solidarity with the UEE.

Human influence on Luminalia doesn't end there. Human merchants also introduced the tradition of hiding empty gift-wrapped packages around landing zones and space stations that could be exchanged for a few credits or a small toy. Yet, one could argue the biggest change Humans made to the holiday was standardizing the oil used in Luminalia lamps so that it burns for 34,000 beats. According to Orisaka, the earliest Human celebrations lasted roughly two days with the exact number of beats fluctuating based on the design of the lamp and the type of oil used. Yet many early Human celebrants either

couldn't find or afford the special oil made by Banu Soulis. This created a large counterfeit market for fuel that either burned too quickly, or worse, released dangerously dirty or toxic fumes. Stories abound from the late 25th century of Luminalia revelers sending emergency comms after lighting a Luminalia lamp with counterfeit oil in poorly ventilated places. The most famous incident resulted in five fatalities after the smoke released by the counterfeit fuel clogged a ship's atmo scrubbers and suffocated the celebrants. Business interests, concerned about losing a rapidly expanding revenue stream, pushed the government to crack down on counterfeit oil manufacturers and adopt a rating system to certify the quality level of oil. Companies manufacturing five-star-rated oils, widely marketed as guaranteeing to burn clean and for 34,000 beats, came to dominate the market by the late 26th century, setting a standard and expectation for future Human generations that the festival should last exactly 34,000 beats.

At first I was disappointed to learn that Luminalia lasting 34,000 beats was probably a Human-made marketing ploy and not some long-lost insight into Banu culture, and I've come to accept that we'll probably never know why Banu originally decided to spend roughly two straight days celebrating Luminalia. Yet, the more I dug into the question, the more I came to understand the answer everyone had given me all along: "because that's how it's always been." I realized that it doesn't matter why we spend two days celebrating with family, friends, and even strangers as if we're all one Souli. It only matters that we do it and that the celebration brings us closer together with those we love. That's the true power of Luminalia and that's all that matters.

*From the microTech
Souli to yours,
Happy Luminalia!*

