

**FREE
POSTER**

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STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND COMIX

**RAY BRADBURY on
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS**

THE PRISONER

SPIDERMAN
~the feature film

STAR WARS



C-3PO UNMASKED

PLUS -- SPACE CRUISER • SURVIVAL RUN • WIZARDS

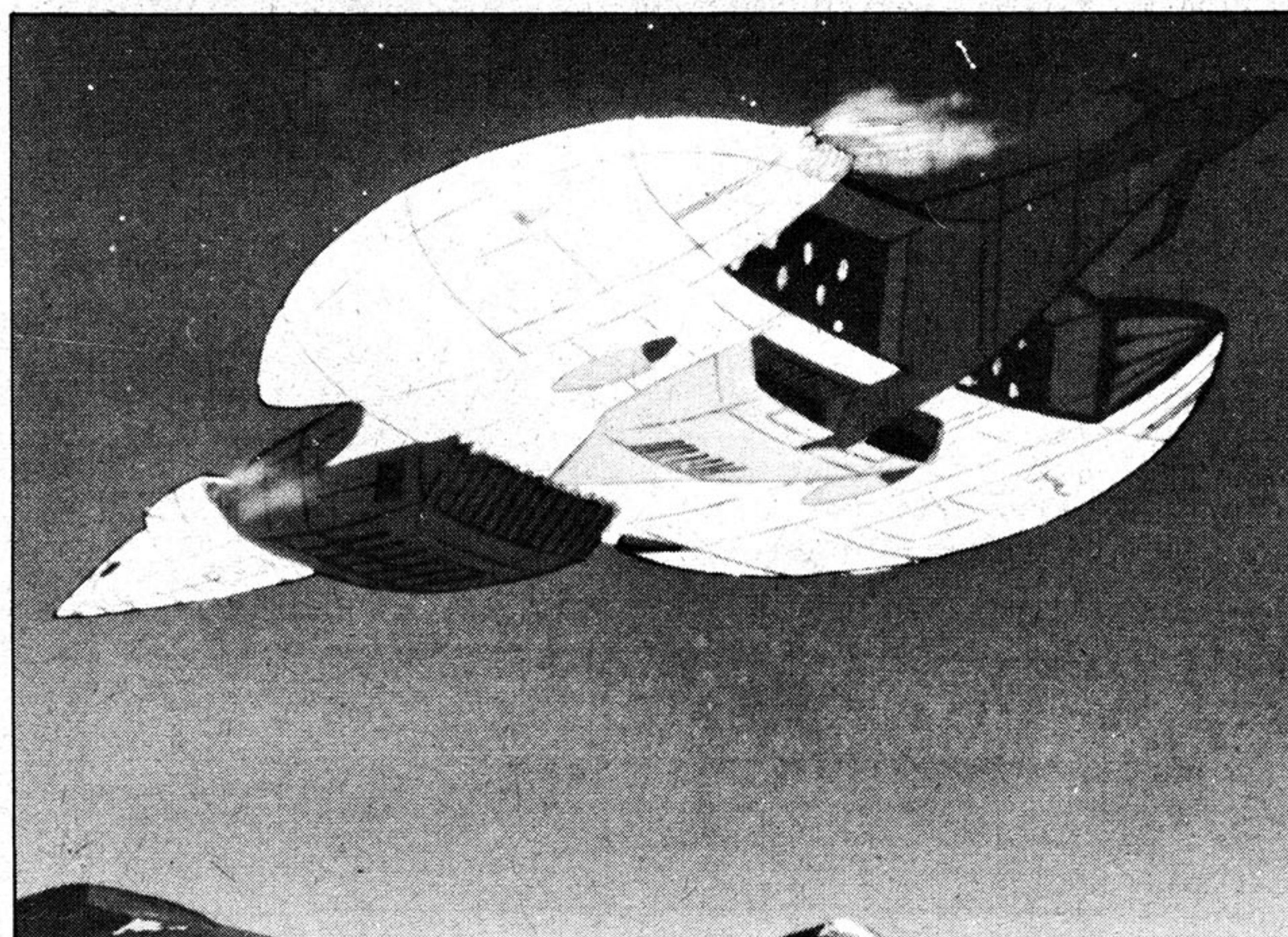
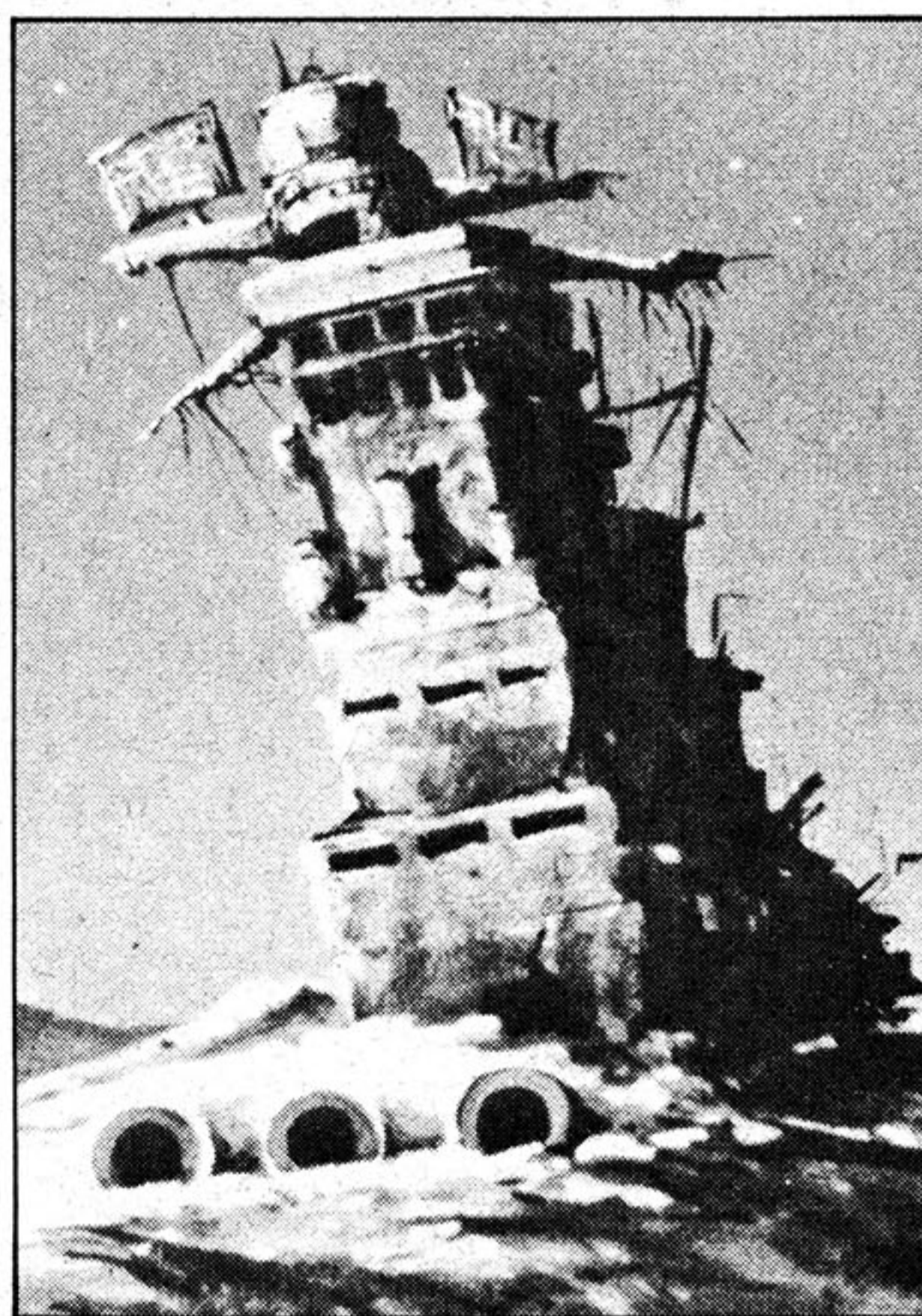
SPACE CRUISER

Review by Tony Crawley

2199 AD. Earth is all but finished. The seas are dried up, the land is irradiated, the people living underground. The Gorgons are winning the galactic wars. Until the peaceful queen of Iscandar sends a message that she has the answer to Earth's radiation blight. She adds blueprints for a time-warp engine to enable the remaining Earth forces to send a rescue craft to her distant planet, 148,000 light years away—and be back home within a year. If there is still a home to get back to by then. The Yamato battleship, pride of the Japanese fleet in World War II, is already secretly refurbished as the last hope of mankind; now with the time-warp adjustments, it lifts from the dust bowl that is the sea-bed and makes its Noah's Ark bid to save humanity as we know it . . .

Considering that *Space Cruiser* must have been in the creation stage at the same time as *Star Wars*—or indeed, due to its animated form, even earlier—it is amazing how similar the films are. Or rather, the stories, characters and mechanicals. Here is a young flier, not quite a farm-boy and sounding more like Tony Perkins than Mark Hamill, suddenly leading the good fight against the galactic nasties. Here is a beautiful princess, complete with interstellar message. Here is the time-warp, an exact double of Lucas' hyperspace effect. Here is a stellar battle right out of 633 Squadron again—in fact, here's another and another and oh no! yet another. Far too many such battles, without time to refuel the brain as to whose star-fighters are whose. And here, hardly unveiled until the final third of the epic, is a double for R2-R2 (one; not three as shown on the inaccurate poster design), utilising the same vocal register of bleeps and burps.

In essence, the film appears to be the Ralph McQuarrie production art for *Star Wars* in (jerky) animation. A moving story-board for a film to come. A better film, to be more trimmed in length, style and application. And, one would hope, un-animated at that. Indeed, the film's major surprise is that here in Japan, probably the most expert technical nation on earth, resorting to cartoonery instead of

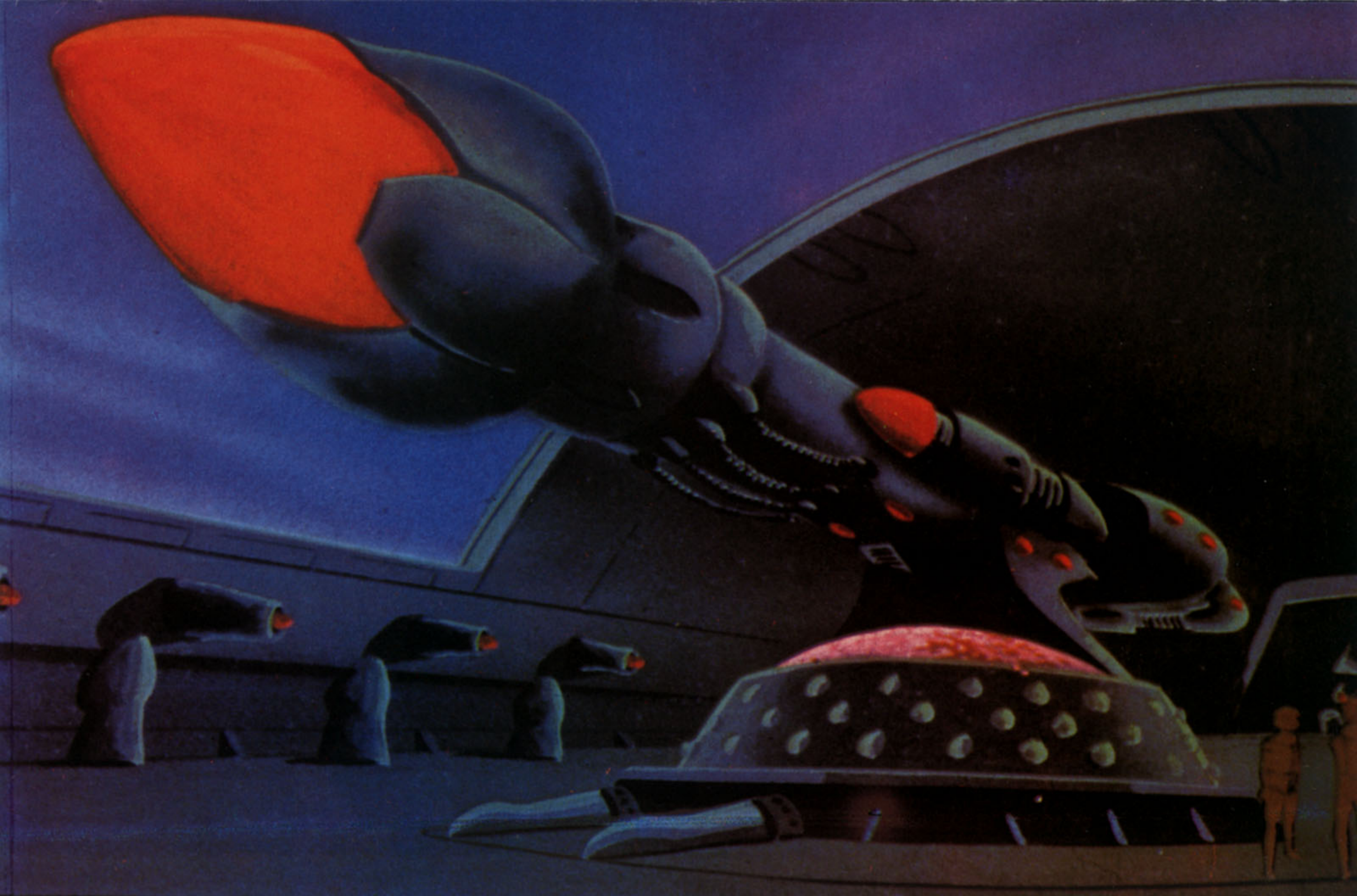


Above Top: In ruin, the Cruiser Yamato, before blasting off as a rebuilt space ship. Above: One of the many varied space flyers of the Yamato.

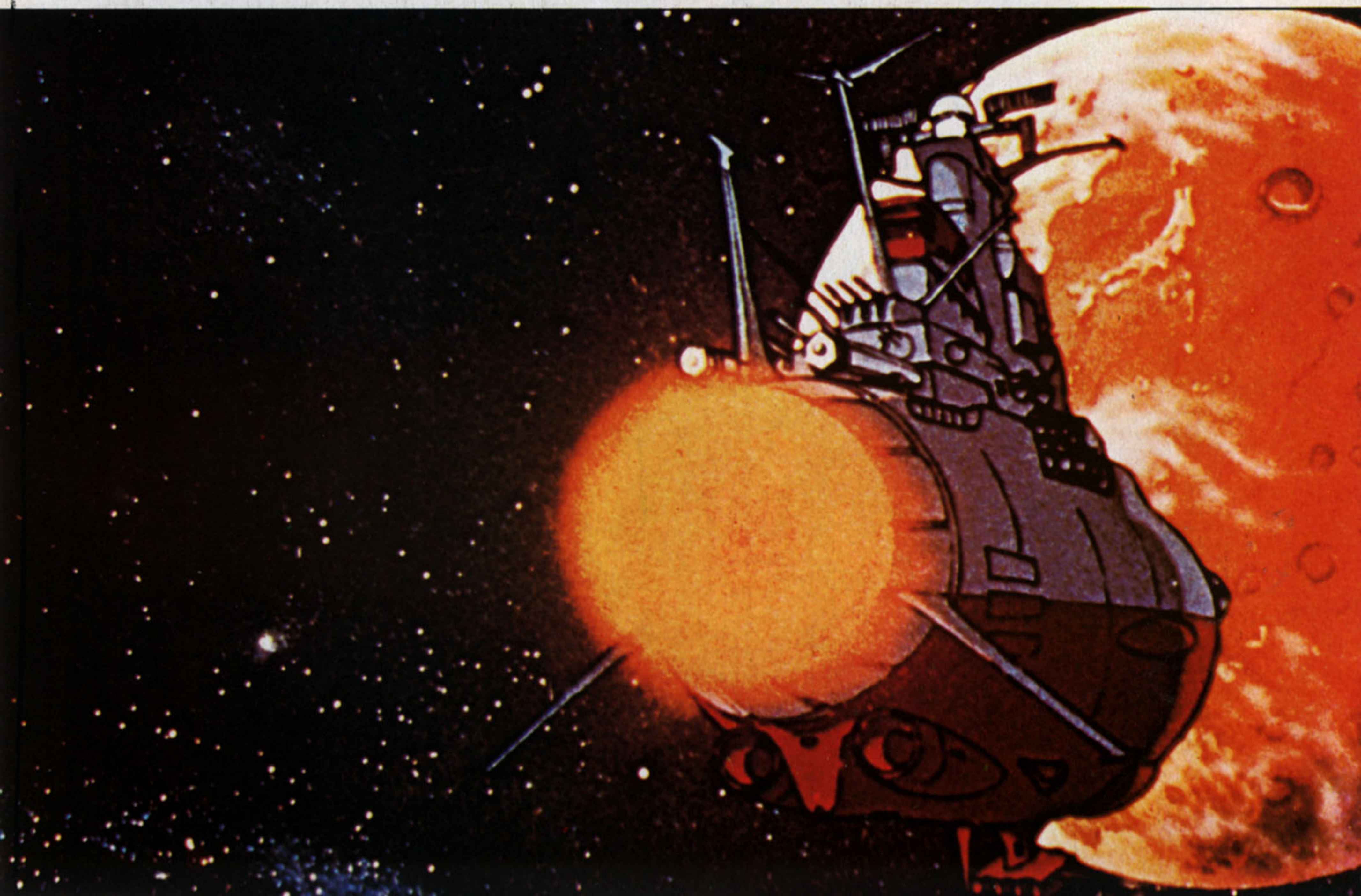
the 'real' thing, *à la* George Lucas.

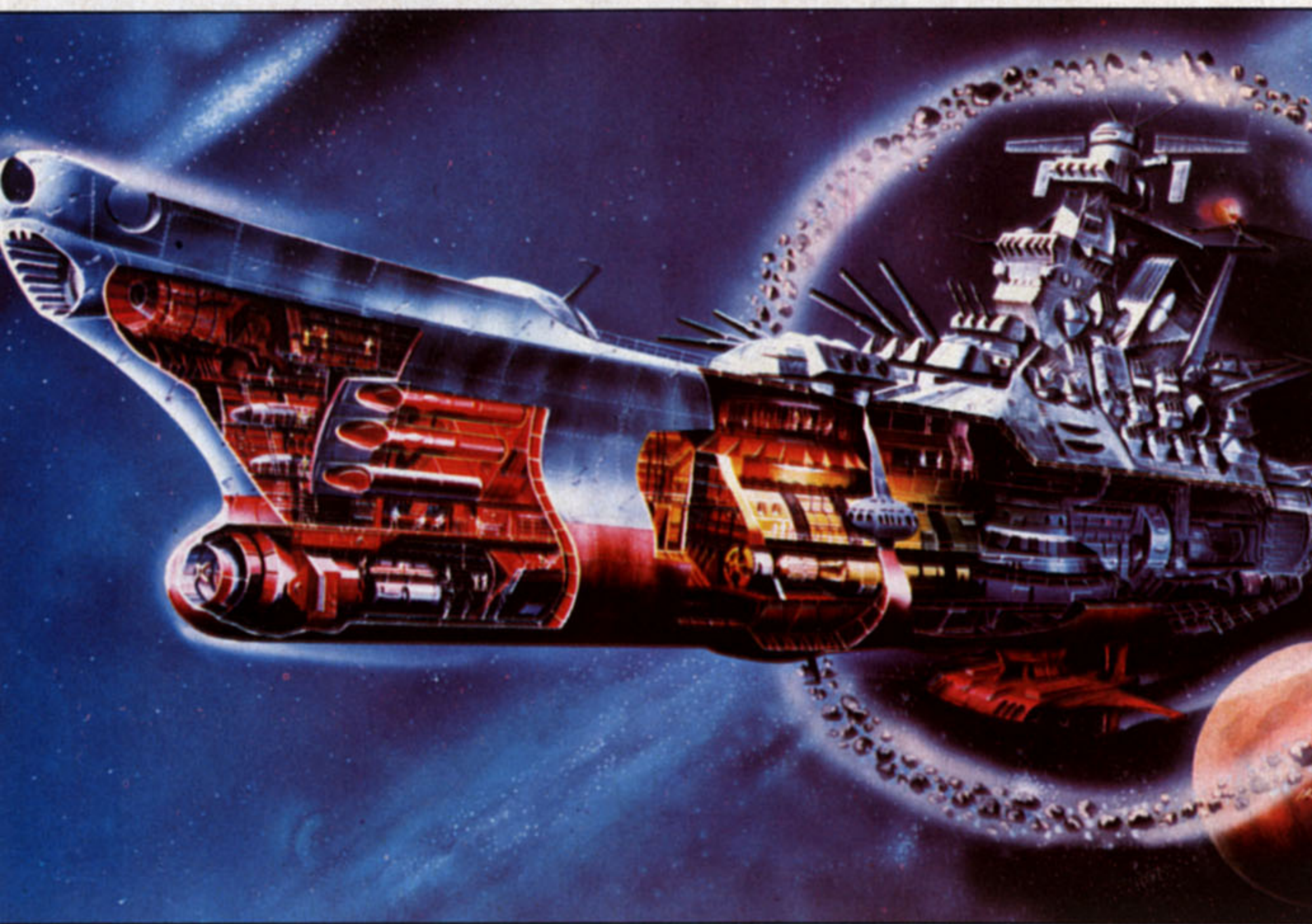
We understand the story enanates from a popular Tokyo newspaper strip. Certainly looks, sounds, *feels* that way. Indeed, given the over-complicated, over-populated and under-described storyline—an overkill of space wars with adventures piled up, incessantly, upon one another—it has the form of a weekly TV serial, knitted together in feature form. More plain, than pearl . . .

The first half is riddled with repetitious dialogue, more characters and planets than in the A-D phone book; very difficult to keep up with, minus a scoreboard. However, there does come one stunning sequence. Where the fiendish Gorgons make a triple-pronged attack on our hapless heroes in the Yamato. For once, the actions and the narration slow down, so that it's just us and them, just one tactical move at a time; one well-sprung trap after the other. Here at last, tension, suspense is introduced; and for once even the animation looks good. A spiffing sequence this,



Above: One of the mighty Gorgon weapons, aimed ready to strike the Yamato. Below: The Space Cruiser blasts down towards a planet.





A beautiful piece of production artwork, showing the cut-away interiors stocked with mighty weaponry aboard the Space Cruiser.

more than making up for the previous jumbled frolics.

It goes without saying that the Yamato survives—miraculously—everything flung

in its wake, which amounts to World War II five times over. By which time our young ensign hero is suddenly placed in overall command by the old Admiral figure, who

retires to his sick bed, to ruminate on how he ever time-warped from Tin-Tin or some such strip in the first place.

Between the ceaseless mayhem, there are many perhaps unintentional gags, including a doctor figure who seems to have likewise strayed from a Hanera-Barbera cartoon. But as I say, when the film tries, it works exceedingly well. And one cannot fault its moral: Make friends, not war.

While *Star Wars* is for kids of all ages, *Space Cruiser*—despite its phenomenal success in Tokyo last year—is simply for children. Where *Star Wars* glows with sheer, magical innocence, *Space Cruiser* sinks into a morass of utter naiveté. It's Disney time in space; about as childlike as its, to be frank, less-than-brilliant animation. Basically, the film appears to be a case of the Japanese making up for 1945. The characters may look Westernised, but their language is not. 'We must bear this humiliation.' Catch Han Solo saying that!

Not to be missed if you're interested in how the screen is heading towards science (or space or simple) fiction. Well worthwhile catching while it's raining and the *Star Wars* queues are too long . . . if taken as an *hors d'oeuvres* before the Lucas banquet. Very simple stuff; above all, simple proof as to why *Star Wars* is the success it is.

America has the Force, Japan has the farce.

Big Screen Entertainment~coming soon!

SPACE CRUISER

LIGHT YEARS BEYOND 2001
—it's beyond anything you've ever seen!

PRODUCED, DIRECTED & WRITTEN BY
YOSHINOBU NISHIZAKI

CHARACTER DESIGNER
LEIJI MATSUMOTO

MUSIC COMPOSED BY
HIROSHI MIYAGAWA

CHIEF ANIMATOR
NOBORU ISHIGURO

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